

THE RECORD CONNOISSEUR'S MAGAZINE

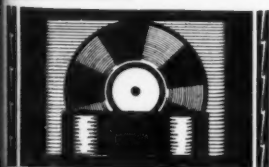
THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

JULY, 1940

MUSICAL ARTICLES — TECHNICAL NOTES

RECORD NOTES & REVIEWS - OVERTONES

COLLECTORS' CORNER - SWING MUSIC NOTES - ETC.



Edited by
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THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

All Worthwhile Recordings Reviewed

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Portrait: Prominent Musical Personalities — Past and Present
No. 33 — Artur Rodzinski



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SOME NOTES ON TSCHAIKOWSKY'S SYMPHONIES

HAD THE CENTENARY OF TSCHAIKOWSKY'S birth come at a different time than this year we can well believe that it would have been celebrated more auspiciously. For one thing the record companies would undoubtedly have given us not just a new recording of his *Fifth Symphony*, but also new recordings of his *Third* and *Sixth*. It is rumored that English recordings of his *Third* and *Second Symphonies* were planned; and along with these one can safely assume that Victor would have released the *Sixth*, made by Furtwangler and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, which has been acclaimed as the finest performance of the *Pasthétique* extant on discs.

Rodzinski's performance of the *Fifth Symphony* seems to have had a mixed reception by critics; there are those who heartily endorse it, others who praise it with reservations, and still others who turn thumbs down on it completely. In this case one can safely say the extremists are less right than the fellows who would straddle the fence. Neither Rodzinski nor Stokowski realizes the definitive performance of this work; perhaps Beecham may have come closer to it, but it is unlikely that we will be given his recently recorded version now that money has been spent to get the Rodzinski performance here. In speaking of this symphony it might be well to correct a belief that the Mengelberg version, which is available on Decca discs, is complete. This is not true: Mengelberg makes two cuts in the last movement — the traditional cut which Rodzinski observes and another of 18 bars in the coda.

Tschaikowsky's *Fifth Symphony* was first played in America on March 5th, 1889, at a concert given by Theodore Thomas and his Symphony Orchestra. The evening introduced to New York audiences another new work as well — MacDowell's *Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op. 23*, played on this occasion by the composer. Since the latter work is recorded, it might interest our readers to know what the noted critic, H. E. Krehbiel, wrote of these two works the following morning in the New York Tribune. His criticism follows:

"It is not to depreciate the symphony, but only because there was a patriotic as well as

artistic interest in the composition of Mr. MacDowell, that I confess to having derived keener pleasure from the work of the young American than from the experienced and famous Russian. Tschaikowsky I have often had an opportunity of praising; Mr. MacDowell, a New Yorker, has only recently entered the field, and though all of his music that has been played here . . . has received word of praise from me, his artistic stature had never appeared so great as on this occasion. His concerto afforded a delight of no mean order. It is a splendid composition, so full of poetry, so full of vigor, as to tempt the assertion that it must be placed at the head of all works of its kind produced by either a native or adopted citizen of America. But comparisons are not necessary to enable one to place an estimate upon it. It can stand by itself and challenge the heartiest admiration for its contents, its workmanship, its originality of thought and treatment . . .

"The new symphony is Tschaikowsky's fifth work of its kind. In structure it suggests at least one of its predecessors, and in spirit it is characteristic of its composer's familiar style. A good stiff hymn tune (with rhythmic and melodic reminiscences of the duet between Valentine and Marcel in the *Huguenots*, singularly enough), treated in the minor mode, forms the introduction to the first movement, which is a stirring march, and also the principal subject of the finale, where it is consorted with a dance tune of Russian character, and varied in the audacious manner which is a distinctive trait of the writers of the Muscovite school. The second movement is an *andante cantabile*, in which the composer's pinions spread themselves for a truly noble and sustained flight. A unique feature is a waltz, which, as the third movement, takes the place of the customary *Scherzo*. It is a waltz with a difference—and the difference is Russian. Instead of the bewitching swing of the Viennese dance, this waltz has a melancholy movement—it breathes the spirit of a people who can be desperate and boisterous in their humor, but not light-hearted and careless."

What a difference of opinion this represents from that universally shared at this time! The MacDowell concerto today, even to those

of us who may admire the work, no longer occupies the conspicuous place in American music that it did forty years ago. As for the symphony, despite its Meyerbeerian opening, it has come to be regarded as the most popular work of its kind by its composer.

Viewpoints have not only changed about Tschaikowsky's music since those days, but the interpretation of his music has also undergone a change. During the last decade of the 19th century Tschaikowsky was played with a great deal more flourish and pomp than we hear today. The emotional aspects of his music were unquestionably exaggerated. All of this was climaxed in performances of the *Pathétique* given in those days. Paul Rosenfeld, in our May issue, told us something about Safanoff's performance of this work, but he did not tell us all. And since Safanoff largely represented an era, the following by Sidney Grew, the English writer, may interest the reader.

"The 1890s seem, in imaginative historical view, to be filled with the rising tide of the *Pathétique Symphony*, and the 1900s to contain that tide at the full. For the work really dominated the musical interests of those two decades, so that every amateur knew of it and eagerly tried to hear performances of it, and every critic discussed it.

"This was partly because of the circumstance that the symphony marked the climax of an era (the era of the 19th century phase of "subjective" music), and partly because of the beauty, power and individuality of the music itself—qualities it owned in common with Dvorak's *New World Symphony* and the great orchestral tone poems of Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Don Juan*, *Ein Heldenleben*, *Zarathustra*, etc. It was a very opulent generation!

"Middle aged musicians of today were caught in the high point of that swelling fame of the *Pathétique*, and most of them have in their recollections one individual performance of the many they heard which stands supreme. For myself, this was a performance by Safanoff about the year 1910, when the heavy stone fabric of Birmingham Town Hall was rendered as imponderable as the cloud-topped towers of a poet's imagination, and all the world appeared fused into the substance of the thought of the music.

"A fellow critic has remarked of the *Scherzo*, 'I never have heard enough sound at the climax.' If he had been present at the Safanoff performance, he would have heard enough then. It brought some of the audience to their feet. It delayed the start of the finale

by several minutes, the applause being so irresistably inspired. And it shook the conductor out his customary splendid calm, so that he turned to the audience, thrust arms in the air, and held them so while one could have counted fifty at a fair andante pace.

"Tschaikowsky said in a letter to Jurgenson: 'On my word of honor, I have never felt such self-satisfaction, such pride, such happiness, as in the consciousness that I am really the creator of this beautiful work.' To the Grand Duke Constantine he wrote: 'Without exaggeration, I have put my whole soul into it.' (The 'most sincere' of all his works is how he described it to another friend.) Of the finale he was a trifle doubtful, and thought that when he had once heard it in performance he might destroy that movement, and write another.

"The first performance took place at St. Petersburg on October 10th, 1893. Tschaikowsky conducted. At rehearsal the orchestra were clearly not much impressed by the music, and the critics were a trifle dubious about it. A month later the symphony was played a second time. The conductor now was the great Edward Napravnik (1839-1915), whose rendering it was that at once started the work on its amazing flow around and about the world.

"At the first performance the symphony had no title, other than *Symphony in B minor*. At the second (Napravnik's) it was named the *Pathétique*. The composer originally intended to call the work *A Program Symphony*—without, however, detailing and applying any program. This idea he abandoned. But he still wanted a title. It was his brother who suggested *Pathétique*, to which Tschaikowsky responded: 'Bravo, Modeste, splendid! *Pathétique*!'

"Eventually the critics found that the opening theme is rather like the opening theme of Beethoven's *Sonata pathétique*. Tschaikowsky was then dead. But his brother assures us that he 'never dreamed' that his and Beethoven's themes had anything in common.

"The subjective emotion of the 19th century has gone with its day, and the music embodying it has either had to objectivize itself or to fall out of the running. This is the common cause of all art originally 'romantic'. Consequently such a work as this of Tschaikowsky makes a different appeal nowadays, even to the men and women it partly formed, and the performance has to be different: it is possible that even the Napravnik and Safanoff treatment of the last generation would not fully satisfy us at this time."

SCHUMANN TODAY

PART TWO

PHILIP BARR

SCHUMANN'S MUSIC MUST NOT ONLY BE heard in fairly cosy surroundings, but it must be heard *very clearly*. He is apt to give you an elaboration of inner parts which are fascinating to play and hauntingly beautiful when heard at close quarters, but simply do not come over in a concert-hall. Such things as the slow portions of the fifth *Novelette* are still scarcely known, after a hundred years.

Schuman is sometimes, too, given to over-modulation—too many dissonances. This does not make his music sound harsh; it makes it sound monotonous. Besides, it is very wrong, according to our present fashion. We are all for simplicity, these days. We know that as a youth he liked rambling over the keys with the pedal down. This is a clue to his mastery of the haunting dissonance—the tenuous sound of a chord that dies away (the piano's most unique feature). But we have lately been reacting towards a more percussive treatment of the instrument.

On paper, Schumann's music often looks excessively complicated. A newcomer, examining it, might say: "This music indicates an unbalanced mind. You say he died in a mad-house? I can well believe it . . . look at all those suspensions—can't the man ever settle down?"

Schumann *has* some maddening eccentricities, it is true, notably his fondness for writing off the beat—there is something neurotic, I grant, about that. But his harmony does not come under this heading. The music never sounds as complicated as it looks; "those suspensions" slip by as unobtrusively as Palestrina's because they are part of a very sane and direct, logical plan. I have been astonished, on going slowly over something of his I'd heard for years, to find how elaborate and dissonant it really was. Speed had hidden from me these details—and they (unlike the inner parts) *should* be so hidden. What matters is the main design.

But it seems hard, conversely, that many people who judge too much by the general effect (as opposed to those who judge too much by the printed page) give him no credit for these audacities—because his logic has concealed them — and pass him by as a humdrum, ordinary composer.

Here the older critics were wiser, their ears were more sensitive to discords than ours. Progressives of the '50's like the young William Mason, who raved about the *First Symphony* (his first Schumann) and said that here was something better than Mendelssohn . . . Composer for composer, he was perfectly right, though we would not now agree with him as to the merits of their respective symphonies.

Those people, on the other hand, who harp on Schumann's eccentricities are those who perform him. (It is his misfortune often to look to queer on paper and not sound queer enough in performance.) His writing off the beat is very irritating to the performer because it is so often a mere waste of time—he stays off it so long that the effect is as if he were on the beat. This is the reverse of true syncopation. How can the audience tell where the true beat is? They simply hear one thing while the performers "think" another; that is all.

One eccentricity he has (of no concern to the listener) that has been needlessly abused: his directions. I grant that his metronome marks won't do; the metronome was out of order. But it is silly to cavil at his putting "as fast as possible" in the *Second Sonata* and adding "faster" later on—the change is perfectly consistent; the music is easier at this point and *can* be played faster. Anyhow, it is a mistake to be too literal; when he gives the same direction in the *Third Sonata*, for a very long movement, he presumably means: "as fast as you can keep it up to the end". Not: "as fast as you can—beginning now!"

His passion for German directions was not absolutely unbounded. *Durchaus phantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen* is a bit of a

mouthful for anybody who isn't a German—he should have remembered that Italian musical directions are a universal language, as was proved some ten years later by Dumas' Baron Danglars, escaping from France. While he drove through Italy this gentleman directed the coachman with expressions he had learned from opera . . . "*più presto!* . . . *rallentando* . . .", etc.—they were all the Italian he knew but they got him safely through the country.

However, Schumann was no slave to his German directions. As he said: "But we doubt whether such extraordinary translations as 'Bardiet' for 'Symphony', will ever be accepted, and we cannot approve of them; no one can deprive us of our 'Lied', and let us accept 'Sonata' and 'Rondeau' as they are. . ."

Schumann's logic, his power of subordinating detail to design, is only another name for constructive power—and yet, this is where he is supposed to be weak.

He is weak—when it comes to constructing big movements. There (with a few great exceptions) he either becomes timid and diluted, as in the Symphonies, or cracks up in the middle, as in the Finale of the *Études Symphoniques*. He is best in those happy explosions I have mentioned; he is, after all, a man of his age, a master of the purple patch. I never saw a purple patch where Schumann fails to give you a strong feeling of *direction*. He will not go very far with it, perhaps—but for a couple of pages more you ought to be sure of a perfect, breathless continuity. For the time being Schumann is in the saddle; he will give you motion, drama; he inherits the tradition of all the great Viennese.

Schumann is not, in my estimation, the most successful composer for the phonograph. Recent technical improvements in recording have made a considerable difference, however, in reproducing his music more favorably than heretofore. One remembers the series of recordings that Fanny Davies did for Columbia. They would unquestionably have benefited by modern recording; and that was very important too, for Fanny Davies was a "tradition". She learned to play Schumann from none other than Clara, his wife, who it will be remembered was famous not only as a pianist but likewise as a teacher.

The intimate atmosphere, the domestic interior—all that side of phonographic listening is in Schumann's favor; but the thick texture and the hidden detail which are so often, even at best, hidden in the concert-hall, are just as obscure in any but the most ideal recording. An example of what good recording and clarity in performance can do for Schumann is well

cited in the new Koussevitzky recording of the *First Symphony*. It almost makes one forget that Schumann was ever regarded as a clumsy orchestrator. Moreover Koussevitzky, while giving a truly brilliant reading, avoids the temptation to speed the music up; so his performance preserves the proper Schumann quality.

Schumann's piano music suffers especially, for here is yet another difficulty; the haunting effect that follows after the note has been sounded dies away too quickly. There should be an infinite variety in the reverberations of the tone; on a phonograph they sound too uniform and the effect is therefore of a monotonous and steady ring. Bachaus' recent recording of the great *Fantasy in C major* (Victor set M-463) is an instance of this. Myra Hess' recording of the *Carnaval* (Victor set M-476) is much better (but then the *Carnaval* is written in a more brilliant style); it is a much better job than her recording of the piano concerto which I find slightly pedestrian, and indeed I should call it the most satisfactory Schumann recording to date from the standpoint of tonal variety in reverberation. [The contention, made by so many critics, that the Hess performance of the *Carnaval* lacks essential expression and rhythmic definition would seem to be based on a different feeling regarding the interpretation of Schumann's music that Mr. Barr owns. Ed.]

Nearly all of the best Schumann recordings are issued by Victor, although incidentally the Victor set of *Davidsbündlertänze* (played by Cortot) is outclassed by the Muscraft set (No. 36, played by Kurt Appelbaum). The latter is a much better rendition, although it omits one of the numbers. But Cortot has contributed one important Schumann recording—*Kreisleriana* (Victor set M-493).

There are some fairly good records of the songs. One of the latest essays in this direction is, however,—to my way of thinking—unfortunate; a selection of duets, sung by Lehmann and Melchior, with the piano accompaniments absurdly arranged for orchestra; the consequence being that they sound not only too sweet but too operatic. The intimate charm is completely destroyed. Earlier sets worth mentioning are the *Dichterliebe* of Charles Panzera (Victor set M-386), accompanied by Cortot, and the *Liederkreis* of Friedrich Schorr (Victor set M-430). Although Panzera's performance is extremely musical, he is, however, a little bit too finicky in his pronunciation; and Schorr, owing to bad recording balance, is allowed to drown his accompaniment. Elisabeth Schumann has contributed several worthy

discs of songs; and on Polydor, Heinrich Schlusnus has also made quite a few that are excellently recorded from the standpoint of balance between the singer and the piano. It is unfortunate that Lotte Lehmann's beautifully sung records of a number of songs, made when she was in her finest voice, are all the victims of trumped-up accompaniments that simply debase the sentiment of the music; for these might well have been the best of the composer's song-recordings. (Originally recorded for Odeon, these have been repressed by domestic Decca on generally poor surfaces.)

The orchestral works come off fairly well, better than most of the piano works. The piano concerto, I very definitely feel, has never been done really satisfactorily (Myra Hess has played it better in concert many times); of existent sets, however, I should recommend the Hess one (Victor M-473). The inferior "lost" violin concerto has a brilliant recording by Menuhin (Victor set M-451). The Second and Third Symphonies, musically the finest, in my opinion, are recorded (we could stand a new version of the *Rhenish*), although the Second is slightly too brilliant for its own good on most machines (Victor sets M-448 and M-237). Unquestionably the best of the symphony recordings is the new recording of the First, already mentioned. There is a new recording by Bruno Walter of the Fourth, which has not been released as yet in this country, and which may well prove more desirable than the existent versions available here at this time.

There are plenty of chamber works on records. Menuhin and his talented sister have done the *Sonata in D minor*, Op. 121 (Victor set M-233), and Adolf Busch and Rudolf Serkin have done the *Sonata in A minor*, Op. 105 (Victor set M-551). Schnabel and the Pro-Arte Quartet have contributed a satisfactory performance of the popular *Quintet in E flat major* (Victor set M-267). But one does not turn to the chamber music to become acquainted with the essential Schumann; that lies in the piano music and the songs. To me, Schumann is at his worst in his string quartet efforts: the *Quartet in A major*, Op. 41, No. 3 (Victor set M-224) is an example of how tedious his mannerisms—sentimentalism and a form of syncopation that merely makes you lose your place—can become when there is no true inspiration.

Among new recordings there are Edward Kilenyi's performance of the *Etudes Symphoniques* (Columbia set X-162) and an unnamed pianist's performance of the *Faschings-schwank aus Wien* (Timely set 7-C). Of the

Kilenyi performance it has been aptly said that he in no way misrepresents the facts or poetic qualities of the *Etudes*, but his performance at the same time owns no distinguished qualities either interpretatively or pianistically. The idea of recording a work like the *Faschings-schwank* with the emphasis on the music rather than performer may be a good one, but the performance issued by Timely does not incite any desire in me to solve the identity of the pianist, since the performance is on a par with the one just mentioned. It lacks rhythmic subtlety, and is in no way a distinguished one.

All of the recordings I have spoken about are familiar Schumann. What we want now are more of the out-of-the-way compositions. There are still some very fine piano works, like the *Humoresque*, which is not recorded (hardly ever performed for that matter)—not to mention his choral music, *Faust* and *Paradise and the Peri* for instance. As Schumann's popularity is rising again, and as recordings are steadily improving, it may be hoped that such gaps as these will in the course of time be fulfilled.

TECHNICAL REPORT

PHILCO'S NEW PICKUP

LELAND L. CHAPMAN

■ The Philco Company has announced a new pick-up to be available shortly in their combination models. Since a pick-up of this type has not been available on the market heretofore, the Editor and this writer attended a demonstration given by the sponsors, and pass on to our readers such information as is available.

The stylus has a permanent sapphire point (really a tiny ball), and instead of actuating a crystal or a magnetic armature, the stylus actuates a small thin mirror, so that the lateral variations in the record grooves oscillate the mirror in accordance with the variations in the record grooves. A small light beam generated by a specially constructed flash-light type bulb shines on the mirror and as the mirror oscillates, the light beam is deflected by the oscillating mirror, again in accordance with the variations in the record grooves. The reflected beam is focused upon a photoelectric cell and the oscillations in the

reflected beam generate corresponding varying electric impulses in the photoelectric cell. These electric impulses are then amplified and sent to the loud speaker in the usual manner. The stylus has to move nothing but the mirror; therefore the moving mass is low and the needle impedance (or stiffness) is small. This construction permits the pick-up to be light in weight so that the pressure of the sapphire point on the record is only a fraction of that in ordinary pick-ups. This is claimed to reduce record wear and scratch about 90 per cent. The pick-up apparently has sufficient ruggedness to withstand household use and demonstrations of dropping the sapphire ball on the record and scratching it across the grooves did not appear to damage it.

The pick-up is designed to cover a frequency range of 50 to 5,000 cycles per second, the frequencies above and below this point being purposely eliminated in the construction. The pick-up is not, therefore, an advancement in the high fidelity field. Its principal contribution is in the lessening of record wear and needle scratch through lightness of low needle impedance, and for our readers who are interested particularly in the latter, the pick-up will be of interest.

The manufacturers' representatives feel that the majority of the public is interested in low needle scratch and that the frequency range cannot be increased without increasing the scratch to a point which is inconsistent with their aim in eliminating scratch. The

principle employed, however, seems sound, and it is likely that other constructions using it can be developed which will have a frequency response equivalent to that recorded on the records, which is as high as 7,000 to 8,000 cycles per second.

The manufacturers claim that the pick-up will not be available separately, but will be sold only in combination sets. The wisdom of this decision is understandable, since the lighting for the flashlight bulb in the pick-up requires a special current which makes separate installation difficult, and the low output of the photoelectric cell requires additional amplification not available in the ordinary radio.

The tonal quality of the machine that was used in the demonstration heard by the Editor and the writer was not especially enhanced by the new pick-up, as far as could be ascertained. There was undeniably an absence of needle noise and an almost complete elimination of resultant needle scratch hiss; but this sort of thing can be and has been similarly accomplished more or less by the elimination of the high frequencies in the amplifier, for example by tone control. The main feature of the new Philco pick-up, as we see it, is the reduction in record wear, plus the possibility that a light pick-up like this would make it possible for a record manufacturer to use a softer and more noiseless composition in the record. Thus it will be seen that this new invention may well create changes in the record industry.

TOVEY'S ESSAYS - VOL. 6

CHORAL CONDUCTING

TWO BOOK REVIEWS

ESSAYS IN MUSICAL ANALYSIS, VOL. 6—Supplementary Essays, Glossary and Index. By Donald Francis Tovey. Oxford University Press. Price \$4.00.

■ This is the last of Prof. Tovey's books of program notes, which he wrote over a number of years for his concerts with the Reid Orchestra in Edinburgh. The present volume contains notes on symphonies, overtures, and vocal works. It makes up for omissions in the previous volumes with its material on Berlioz, Tchaikowsky, Mahler, Sibelius and others. There is a chapter on Linear Harmony in Bach, and another on Wagner in

the Concert-Room. Also there is a final section in which the writer reviews what has gone before, and furnishes a glossary on musical terms, and an index to all six volumes.

Tovey does not let his admirers down in his last volume: he writes here in his usual masterly and entertaining style, providing shrewd and apt considerations as well as some views that are both highly provocative and debatable. One does not, however, have to agree with a man as imaginative, and at the same time as scholarly and witty, as Tovey is. He makes us realize how really worthwhile it is to listen to music with a broad mind and

enjoy it for what there is in it, yet at the same time he does not leave us in doubt as to its true values. He tells us, apropos of this, that "it cannot be too often pointed out that the duty of the writer of program notes is that of the counsel of defense. Whatever the discerning critic may find to say against a composition, the program writer has no business to say anything that interferes with the listener's enjoyment of the music; but he may be guided by times and seasons . . . A clear distinction between good music and bad ought to be absolute for responsible persons. The distinction between bad good music and good bad music is an excellent conversational topic for talkers who can keep their tempers, but I never ventured to describe it as a subject for student's essays. Nor do my duties as counsel for the defense compel me to say anything further that can interfere with the listener's enjoyment of Tchaikowsky's Fifth Symphony." He had very ingeniously referred to Tchaikowsky's symphonies as light music when compared to Brahms, in a long paragraph which we will leave to the reader to seek out. And he goes on by stating he likes all but the last movement of the *Fifth*, which he feels "wants to go and cannot."

Perhaps the most provocative material in the book will be found in his chapter on Wagner in the Concert-Room. For modern disparagers of Wagner, he says: "No reasonable person would expect Debussy to enjoy Wagner, or Berlioz to enjoy Bach. We want such artists to get on with their own work, and we do not see why they should be asked to listen to what disturbs them. But I frankly own that my social tact will never be equal to meeting with urbanity the anti-Wagnerian table-talk of the present day."

CHORAL CONDUCTING. By Archibald T. Davison. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. Price \$2.00.

■ Here is the book for which every aspiring young choral conductor must have been waiting, and which he will do well to keep within easy reach throughout his career. Dr. Davison, as everybody knows, has been one of the strongest forces for musical improvement in our country. For many years conductor of the Harvard Glee Club and the Radcliffe Choral Society, he so revolutionized the style of their singing that today they rank with the best choruses in the country, and regularly appear with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. If the very word "glee club" becomes obsolete it will be largely through his achievements. The

secret of his success will be discovered by anyone who reads his book—and I suspect that there will be many without the slightest thought of becoming conductors who will find it not only instructive but entertaining. For the warm and genial personality which has made Dr. Davison's career so fruitful is apparent on every page.

Happily, in spite of his long experience, Dr. Davison does not attempt to impose his own conclusions and beliefs upon all comers. He states quite frankly in his preface that he does not expect all of his readers to agree with his methods. "To many," he says, "my way with a chorus will seem extreme, even fantastic, and I can believe that few will care to try it." He does not tell the young conductor what to do, but rather states his own convictions after a consideration of the alternatives.

It is surprising to find Dr. Davison telling us frankly of the limitations of women's and men's choruses, and the overwhelming advantages of the mixed choir. "When a conductor undertakes to organize a chorus within the community," he says, "and, finding himself free to choose, elects to establish a chorus of men or women, he is setting his face squarely against the accepted canons of musical art." Young voices, he tells us, are more satisfactory in difficult music than mature or trained ones, and good sight readers are by no means an unmixed blessing to the conductor. And in the matter of pitch his ideas are most illuminating: "For my own part, I believe that the ideal of correctly maintained pitch in a *cappella* singing has been overemphasized." Other things, he feels, are more important. His remarks on talking during rehearsals are amusing and to the point, and his insistence on humor as an attribute of the choral conductor is as novel as it is valuable.

In the chapter on choral technique we find many helpful points, such as the necessity of artificiality in choral singing (wherein it differs from solo singing) and just how far this artificiality should go. He advocates the use of the letter *h* on vowel attacks, and also in passage work—though here, having heard some horrible examples, I think his words should be weighed very carefully. The "seven cardinal issues to be met," according to Dr. Davison, are "Pronunciation, Tone, Breathing, Phrasing, Rhythm, Variety in Dynamics, and Impressiveness." These words, and the order in which they are given, offer a good deal to ponder over.

Not the least valuable feature of the book is the detailed table of contents, which serves as a handy index as well. —P. M.

OVERTONES

■ With the completion of the spring music season little information on recording activities has been available. There are rumors that both Victor and Columbia are to issue new recordings of Gershwin's *Piano Concerto*; the former played undoubtedly by Sanromá, the latter it is said by Oscar Levant.

The catastrophic events abroad have precluded any information regarding records, except in England. The following are the important releases for the month of June in England:

BRAMHMS: *Academic Festival Overture*; Weingartner and London Phil. Orch. Col. disc LX886.

CHOPIN: *Nocturnes in E fl., Op. 9, No. 2* and in *B major, Op. 32, No. 1*; Eileen Joyce. Parlophone disc E11448.

CHOPIN: *Introduction and Polonaise Brillante, Op. 3*; Wm. Pleeth (cello) and Margaret Good (piano). Decca K. 922.

CHOPIN-LISZT: *The Ring*, and *Spring* (from *Op. 74*); Alfred Cortot (piano). H. M. V. DA-1682.

GAY: *Beggar's Opera*; Glyndebourne Opera Company. H.M.V. C-3159/64.

GAY: *Beggar's Opera—Five Songs*; Audrey Mildmay. H.M.V. C3166.

GIORDANO: *Fedora—Amor ti vicia*; and BUZZI-PECCIA: *Lolita*; Beniamino Gigli. H.M.V. DA1722.

HAYDN: *Trios—No. 2 in F sh. mi.; No. 3 in E fl. maj.*; Simon Goldberg (violin); Anthony Pini (cello); and Lili Kraus (piano). Parlophone Society Set, discs SW21/26.

MENDELSSOHN: *Ruy Blas—Overture*; Beecham and London Phil. Orch. Columbia LX879.

MOZART: *Clarinet Concerto in A Maj., K. 622*; Reginald Kell and London Phil. Orch. H.M.V. C3167/70.

ROSSINI: *Ciro in Babilonia—Sinfonia*; E.A. I. R. Sym. Orch., dir. Tansini. Parlophone E11447.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Fantasia on a Theme of Tallis*; Boult and B.B.C. Orch. H.M.V. DB3958/9.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *The Lark Ascending*; F. Grinke (violin) and Boyd Neel Orch. Decca X259/60.

VERDI: *Force of Destiny—Overture*; Munich Phil. Orchestra, dir. Kabasta. H. M. V. DB4642.

WALTON: *Ducts for Children*, and *Popular Song from Facade*; Ilona Kabos and Louis Kentner (piano duet). Columbia DX972/3.

From England comes the news that up until June 5th record sales were being well maintained. Broadcasts are not up to the high standard of pre-war days, due to the transmission scheme adopted for reasons of national safety. A government order recently ordered all automobile radios to be dismantled. The B.B.C. Orchestra, which moved to Bristol sometime in the past two months, is still under the direction of Sir Adrian Boult. Recordings were still being made up until June first.

Columbia announces a price reduction of its 4000-M series (10-inch). These discs, formerly sold at \$1.00, are now priced at 75c each. The music in this series includes popular classics, musical comedy, operetta, operatic arias, art songs, sacred music, liturgical chants, etc. Among artists featured in this series are Claudia Muzio, Charles Kullman, the Don Cossack Choir, Ernst Wolff, Mistinguett, and Myra Hess. All records in this series will carry in the future the new Green Label; and as present manufactured stocks are exhausted, new production of discs in this series will also be made with the Green Label.

* * *

Yella Pessl, the harpsichordist, who is one of those responsible for restoring this instrument to its proper place among modern musical instruments, has been engaged by the Columbia Broadcasting Company for a network series of recitals five times weekly at her own harpsichord. Her schedule is as follows:

Sundays—11:15 to 11:30 A.M. EDST.

Mondays and Tuesdays—5:15 to 5:30 P.M.

Thursdays—3:35 to 3:45 P.M.

Saturdays—6:30 to 6:45 P.M.

Only the Sunday broadcast can be heard locally over WABC; out of town listeners will be able to tune in on all five broadcasts. Miss Pessl says she intends to show in her radio concerts that the harpsichord is not an obsolete instrument, as many would have us believe, but that it is adaptable to modern forms.

RECORD COLLECTOR'S CORNER

by Julian Morton Moses

■ We resume this month our brief discussions of records in the foreign language series of the domestic companies. As we pointed out before, these were mainly repressings from European masters offered here at low prices to attract the most polygot assemblage of peoples in the world.

Our immediate concern is with the Columbia releases for the Italian trade issued during the 1910-1920 decade and appearing in black, blue, green, orange and even multi-colored labels. The importance of this group of operatic records lies in the fact that the popular prices concealed the real prominence of the singers represented, many of whom were first-rate performers here and abroad.

As proof of the value of seeking out select items among the many still to be found (though considerable patience, if not a magnifying glass, may be required) we list below a few of the Italian artists worth the trouble involved. All of them were prominent artists of the La Scala, Metropolitan, Chicago Operas, etc. Some created important roles in modern works and at least one, Ferruccio Corradetti, recently deceased, imparted the rudiments of his art to young vocalists in this vicinity. (Corradetti was regarded in Italy in his time as an equal to De Luca, and indeed, although his voice was not basically as great, his vocal artistry was as smooth and finished as the latter's. Editor.).

COLUMBIA ITALIAN DISCS (E Series)

Garbin, Edoardo — *Manon Lescaut: Donna non vidi mai* (E1816).

Corradetti, Ferruccio — *L'Elisir d'amore: Udite, o rustici* (E1807).

Dalla Rizza, Gilda — *Otello: Ave Maria and Salce, salce* (E1895).

Finzi-Magrini, G. — *Puritani: Ah vieni and Son vergin* (E2065).

Calleja, Icilio — *Carmen: Mia tu sei* (E2348).

Karola, Amelia — *Manon* (Massenet): *Anchor son io and Guizsar* (E2304).

Frascani, Nina — *Carmen: Card Scene and Seguidilla* (E2045).

Anitua, Fanny — *Trovatore: Stride la rampa* (E1896).

Bellatti, Virgilio — *Fra Diavolo: Scenes* (E2089).

Kittay, Teodor — *Tosca: Recondita and Rigolitto: Parmi veder* (E2958).

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RECORD NOTES AND REVIEWS

ORCHESTRA

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 4 in B flat major, Op. 60*; played by the B.B.C. Orchestra, direction Arturo Toscanini. Victor set M-676, four discs, price \$8.00.

■ In the midst of distressing news of a war-torn world, Toscanini's beautifully articulated reading of the opening adagio of this symphony comes as a welcome note of benignity and compassion. And with the entrance of the allegro vivace we are transported into a world without ominous shadows, a world of sunlight and geniality. There is healthy energy here, "godlike energy" our friend W. R. Anderson in *The Gramophone* calls it; an energy "that swings the movement along like the universe itself."

Toscanini takes the adagio considerably faster than most conductors, yet his tempo does not destroy but rather enhances its cantabile characteristics. There is a beautiful flow to the music, the sort of a thing we have come to expect from this conductor. This is one of Beethoven's greatest slow movements, and it anticipates in more than one way the more intensified expressions in his later symphonies. In the scherzo and the finale Toscanini's fine phrasing and accentuation are admirable. Two points of digression from the written score offer conclusive proof that Toscanini does not always observe to the letter the composer's directions: one is the accelerando he makes in the climax of the second movement and the other is a ritard utilized in the latter half of the finale.

Mechanically this set is far from perfect; there is the suggestion that it was made in a performance uninterrupted for the breaks. These latter are abrupt and often ill chosen. The quality of the tone is on the whole good, but not quite up to the highest standards of English recording. The strings come through excellently, but the woodwinds are not as forward in tone as they might be and, as in the latter part of the adagio, the balance is faulty; here the clarinet is obscured. Toscanini's exacting demands for the purest pianissimo almost defeats his purposes in the last bars of the adagio where the drums are given

the syncopated figure before the final chords; these beats on the drums are barely audible.

Despite the above criticism, this recording is eminently worthwhile; it is a notable reading of a symphony less popular than it should be. The music, except for the slow movement, is filled with the joy of life. As for the slow movement, one recalls Berlioz's tributes to it: "From its first bars we are overtaken by an emotion which, towards the close, becomes so overpowering in its intensity that only among the giants of poetic art can we find anything to compare with the sublime pages of the giant of music. . . This movement seems as if it had been sadly murmured by the Archangel Michael on some day when, overcome by a feeling of melancholy, he contemplated the universe from the threshold of the empyrean."

P. H. R.

* * *

BILLINGS-MAGANINI: *Chester*; and GUION: *Arkansas Traveler*; played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, Arthur Fiedler, conductor. Victor 10-inch disc 4502, \$1.00.

■ This little disc offers four different types of Americanism. William Billings (1746-1800) is an important figure in our early musical history because of his many hymn tunes and anthems. Quinto Maganini's arrangement of the most famous of the Billings tunes represents contemporary musical thought in its sounder and more serious aspects. In strong contrast is the country dance tune with which this work is coupled, surely one of the most strongly national things we have in our music. The Guion arrangement is again decidedly American in a quite different way. It is at once elaborate and hearty, notable rather for vigor than for subtle craftsmanship. Of course there is a ready market for this side of the disc, but I think that there is an appeal in the Billings-Maganini which will come as a surprise to many. *Chester*, incidentally, was one of the most popular tunes of revolutionary times, and had both sacred and patriotic words. It is a fine strong melody, and well deserves to be remembered. The recording on both sides of the disc is good if hardly sensational.

—P. M.

DEBUSSY: *Iberia* (5 sides); and ROUSSEL: *Dance of the Nymphs*; played by Paris Conservatory Orchestra, conducted by Piero Coppola. Victor set G-10, three discs, price \$3.25.

■ This set was originally released in March, 1936. At that time it was regarded as a first-rate recording. Since then it has been replaced by a more vivid and lifelike recording by Barbirolli and the Philharmonic Symphony. Recording technique has advanced considerably since this set was made, and what was regarded as vivid and lifelike in 1936 is eclipsed by the recordings of 1939. Changes in microphone technique brought changes in recording.

Although Barbirolli enjoys finer recording than Coppola does here, the latter seems to us more successful as an interpreter of Debussy's imaginative picture of Spain. The fill-in on this set is badly chosen; recorded in 1927, it was regarded as mechanically bad even in its own day. The set is a good buy, however, for the Debussy work. —P. H. R.

* * *

DEBUSSY (arr. Henri Busser): *Petite Suite*; played by Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Piero Coppola. Victor set M-674, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

■ This is an early work of Debussy, written originally for piano four hands. Owing to the popularity of the four pieces, it seems rather strange that no recording of the original piano version exists. Perhaps it might be well for one of the two-piano teams to perform it in this fashion.

The suite consists of *En Bateau*, *Cortège* (disc 4499), *Menuet* and *Ballet* (disc 4500). It is one of the most popular of all Debussy's early compositions, but is chiefly known by the orchestral transcription in which it is played here. Apparently Debussy not only sanctioned this transcription but endorsed it, for we find him including this arrangement in an orchestral concert he gave in Vienna in 1910.

The present recording is not a new one; in fact it must date back six years or more, since Coppola has not been conducting on records an unnamed orchestra since 1935. However, since the music is of the salon genre it does not need a more brilliant reproduction for its enjoyment. —P. H. R.

* * *

HAYDN: *Symphony No. 104 in D major* (London); played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia set M-409, three discs, price \$5.00.

■ Sir Thomas Beecham may be said to occupy the same position in the Columbia catalogue that Toscanini occupies in the Victor. Indubitably his symphonic recordings are among the most musically satisfying that are to be had on Columbia records. In the face of the present world crisis one cannot predict how many more recordings by this highly gifted conductor will be brought forward; but since Sir Thomas is at present in Australia it is not improbable that he may return to America and conduct one of our orchestras. Perhaps the Columbia Broadcasting Company may see fit to invite him to do a series of concerts for them, similar to the Toscanini concerts. Let us hope that something like this does happen, for no one enriches our musical experiences with each new recording quite like Sir Thomas.

In December we had a performance of this symphony by Edwin Fischer and his Chamber Orchestra. At that time I said that perhaps the work might profit better by performance by a larger orchestra. After hearing this recording I feel very definitely that it does, for the work is one of Haydn's biggest instrumental compositions. This was the twelfth and last symphony that Haydn wrote for his London concerts, and in it his artistic stature is revealed at its fullest. As I have previously said, the introduction, together with the gracious, heavenly tune that immediately follows, is one of those inexplainable things in music. The solemnity of the opening is a preface to an enchanting gaiety. All fits together perfectly, and the little rhythmic pattern heard in the strings after the ominous fanfare is later used in the slow movement.

The whole allegro section is played with more melodic elasticity by Beecham than by Fischer. And there are more subtle nuances in the British conductor's performance throughout the whole work. Those tiny gradations of tone in the wistful figures of the introduction and the subtle readjustments of balance in the development section of the first movement are evidences of the conductor's genius. Again, in the andante, he shapes the melody more carefully and brings out its yearning quality. Here there is more suavity to the playing than in the German conductor's performance, a quality undoubtedly enhanced by the greater body of strings of the London Philharmonic.

Beecham has been accused of being too weighty in his minuetts, but his approach to these movements is always one that recognizes the formality; the minuet was regarded in the 18th century as a slow, stately movement.

Another evidence of the conductor's sensitivity is found in his beautiful phrasing of the trio, which he wisely takes at a slower pace.

As eminently musical as I found Fischer's performance of this work, I find this performance a far more illuminating one. The recording has been excellently accomplished.

MOZART: *Divertimento No. 11 in D major, K. 251*; played by Royale Chamber Orchestra, direction Henry Nosco. Royale set No. 40, two discs, price \$2.50.

■ It was a good idea to record this attractive work; the music is full of youthful verve and is festive in spirit. Although not one of Mozart's most famous divertimenti (the famous one in D major is No. 17, K. 334, and is available in two recordings), it is nonetheless a worthy score, and is far more interesting than several of the divertimenti that have been more successfully played in recordings. The work is for two violins, viola, bass, oboe and two horns. It was written in Salzburg, for the twenty-fifth birthday of Mozart's sister (July 30, 1776). The finale of the six movements is a *Marcia alla française*, and the *Menuetto-tema con variazione* as well as the Rondo (4th and 5th movements) both "have a French tinge" (Abert). It has been said that the first movement is in the character of a German song; Blom finds the opening movements full of "homely, sometimes almost yodelling tunes".

The performers are directed here by Henry Nosco, a capable violinist (associated with the NBC Symphony Orchestra). The performance is good but not outstanding; it is the sort of a performance one might expect from a group of musicians assembled for a special occasion. The recording lacks depth and sonority, but the surfaces of the discs are good. We enjoyed the work and recommend it to all Mozarteans; it is worth its price. —P. H. R.

PROKOFIEFF: *Classical Symphony, Op. 25* (3 sides); and MENDELSSOHN: *Scherzo from Octet, Op. 20* (1 side); played by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, direction Dimitri Mitropoulos, Columbia set X-166, price \$4.50.

■ One of the most gifted interpreters of contemporary music, Serge Koussevitzky, made a recording of Prokofieff's symphony ten years ago. Despite its age, this recording still commands respect. It is not that Koussevitzky sets a standard in his performance of certain works that places his recordings of them on a different plane than recordings of others,

but the fact remains that his obvious understanding of the theories of the composer makes most of his interpretations definitive ones. This might suggest that we regard the present performance as an inefficient one, but such is not the fact. The point is that it is often difficult for the listener to readjust himself to another's interpretation of a work after long familiarity with what has turned out to be thoroughly satisfying one. But, as we have pointed out before, there is always room for more than one reading of a musical composition on records.

Mitropoulos gives a brilliant performance here; a performance that confirms our earlier impressions that he leans toward virtuoso orchestral playing. Owing to the more vivid quality of modern reproduction, his first movement proves a more exhilarating experience than the Koussevitzky one. Mitropoulos' tempi in the slow movement, the gavotte and the finale are at variance with Koussevitzky's. For example, the former takes the larghetto at a slightly slower pace, and both the gavotte and the finale at a faster pace. There may be those who will find slower pacing of the larghetto more fitting to the maintenance of a poetic mood, for unquestionably there are those who like the accent placed on sentiment. And there is much to be said for his observance of the vivace marking in the last movement; Toscanini plays this movement even faster. But the quickened tempo of the gavotte destroys some of its inherent grace. Considered on the whole, the performance must be regarded as a successful one, particularly since the recording is both vivid and richly sonorous, but we have the feeling that on the whole Mitropoulos takes the work too seriously.

It has been said that Prokofieff's idea in writing this work "was to catch the spirit of Mozart and to put down that which, if Mozart were living now, he might put into his scores." There are those who profess to find in the first movement certain Mozartean qualities; but we have never been able to locate them. It can be granted that these movements own many measures that are truly classical in mood, but this mood just as often alternates with a wholly modern one. If Prokofieff made the statement attributed to him, we believe he was gently but firmly pulling the public's leg. Perhaps the mood might be termed upon occasion Haydnesque, but not Mozartean; the finale surely is reminiscent of Haydn. But all this does not detract from the delightful qualities of the music; the symphony is a novel and sprightly composition, made up of alert

and telling themes which are ingeniously treated. It is good to have it revived again on records.

The fourth side is given over to a composition which "reveals Mendelssohn's musical characteristics at their best". The orchestration of this piece was made by the composer, who sanctioned its use as an orchestral work apart from its place in the string octet. Fiedler has already given us a recording of the scherzo (December, 1936). Mitropoulos' interpretation is marked by a crisp clarity and technical mastery. —P. H. R.

* * *

PROKOFIEFF: *Peter and the Wolf*, Op. 67; played by the Decca Symphony Orchestra, direction Alexander Smallens, with Frank Luther as Narrator, Decca set No. 130, three discs, price \$3.50.

■ After hearing Koussevitzky's brilliant and expressive performance of this work, with Richard Hale's eloquent and evocative narration, the above performance just does not register. Frank Luther does not bring out the drama with that delightful sense of banter and touch of "dead seriousness" that Hale achieves. And Smallens has none of the nuance and charm of Koussevitzky. Nor can it be said that the recording is comparable to the Boston Symphony set. But then the price is not the same, and it may be observed one gets what one pays for. (A review of the Victor set appeared in our August, 1939 issue.) —P. G.

* * *

SAINT-SAËNS: *Danse macabre*, Op. 40; played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, direction Frederick Stock. Columbia disc 11251, price \$1.50.

■ Saint-Saëns' *Danse macabre* has already been recorded by Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra. This disc, issued at the same price, offers Mr. Stokowski's very little competition. Since the composition revolves about a spectral waltz danced in a graveyard by skeletons, the performance could stand a more exciting and spectacular treatment than it acquires here. Mr. Stock gives a sound performance, there is some nice smooth playing in the opening half, but the climax is disappointing after hearing the Stokowski version. The recording is good but not outstanding. —P. G.

* * *

SIBELIUS: *Karelia Suite*: No. 1—*Intermezzo*, and No. 3—*Alla Marcia*; played by London Philharmonic Orchestra, dir. Walter Goehr. Victor disc 12830, price \$1.50.

■ Had Sibelius wished to call the *Intermezzo* here *The Procession of the Russian Nobles* the title would not have been inept. For, as Cecil Gray has said, the music of the *Karelia Suite* is "the sole work of Sibelius that one could believe to have been written by a Russian if one were to hear it without knowing who had composed it". There is a processional quality to the *Intermezzo*, and a distinct Slavic flavor to the music with its flourishing horns and drums. The *Alla Marcia* on the other hand is gay and light, suggestive of a village festival.

The suite, from which these excerpts are chosen, is named after a province in the south-eastern part of Finland which since the Russian disturbance has been given over to Communistic rule. Gray tells us that the people of Karelia "have the reputation of being of a more vivacious and affable disposition than the rest of the Finnish race"; and these qualities are the ones Sibelius brought out in his music. One wonders whether those happy qualities still exist among the Karelian inhabitants.

Kajanus, when he recorded the first and second symphonies for Columbia a decade ago, used these two excerpts as fillers-in to the sets, and later Columbia reissued them on a single disc. It is fitting, since this older recording was widely admired, that a modern one should be issued. Goehr gives lusty performances and the recording has been excellently contrived. —P. H. R.

* * *

SOUSA: *Washington Post March*, and *El Capitan March*; played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction Arthur Fiedler. Victor 10-inch disc 4501, price \$1.00.

■ Two of Sousa's most famous marches are here given good energetic performances by Fiedler and his orchestra. For those who like music essentially for military band played by a symphony orchestra, this disc will appeal. The recording is brilliant and full. —P. G.

* * *

STRAUSS: *Death and Transfiguration*, Op. 24 (5 sides); and BEETHOVEN: *Prometheus—Overture* (1 side); played by London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Albert Coates. Victor set G-11, three discs, price \$3.25.

■ This recording is vintage of 1928. Mechanically it was not too good even when issued, and today it is far from what we have come to know in recent years. The H. M. V. Company in England, who made this recording originally,



★ ★ ★
**Toscanini's triumphant performance
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Again and again Arturo Toscanini has proved his marvelous prowess in conducting the mighty music of Beethoven. He reveals his mastery once more in this glowing performance of the B Flat Major, No. 4—a work at once tender, joyful and melodious, distinctly of the master's most gracious mood. Mr. Toscanini's associates of the British Broadcasting Corporation Symphony Orchestra, representing the finest orchestral talent in all Europe, give a splendid account of themselves. The fine recording, endorsed by the Maestro, is a notable example of the RCA Victor Higher Fidelity process. Ask for the Musical Masterpiece of the Month, Album M-676 (*AM-676 and *DM-676) 8 sides, \$8.00.

A Premiere for the Primrose Quartet

William Primrose needs no introduction to Victor Record enthusiasts. His fame as a violinist, as a member of this quartet and as a master of chamber music is world wide. His colleagues, Shumsky, Gingold and Shapiro are also renowned virtuosi. For its first recording, this impressive foursome has chosen Smetana's Quartet in E Minor ("From My Life"). Its passionate, melodic qualities make it a perfect vehicle for the mature musicianship of this remarkable group. Album M-675 (*AM-675 and *DM-675) 7 sides, \$7.00.

*Tschaikowsky, Debussy and Brahms
 —Paganini Showpieces*

Victor honors the Tchaikowsky Centennial with another superbly recorded selection—The Sleeping Beauty Ballet—which includes all the delightful material of this charming work. Played by Sadler's Wells Orchestra, conducted by Constant Lambert. Album M-673, 6 sides, \$5.00. A perfect accompaniment for summer pleasures is Debussy's Petite Suite, containing the piquant, delicate and wholly delightful melodies En Bateau, Cortège, Menuet and Ballet. Piero Coppola, conducting a symphony orchestra, gives them a colorful, sunny interpretation. Album M-674, 4 sides, \$2.50

A MidsummerM

Magnificently equipped with youth, vitality and sensitive musical instinct, Ossy Renardy makes his debut on Victor Records with the Paganini Caprices. His performance of these exacting little violin pieces is a revelation of great talent and distinction. Walter Robert is Mr. Renardy's piano accompanist. Album M-672, 6 sides, \$6.50.

The excellent RCA Victor Recording of Brahms' Concerto No. 1, in D Minor will be heartily welcomed by the admirers of both the composer and the artist, who are legion. In essaying this masterpiece, Schnabel has the cooperation of the great London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Georg Szell. The records are an achievement resounding to the credit of all concerned. Album M-677 (*AM-677 and *DM-677) 12 sides, \$12.00.

This Month in the Connoisseur's Corner

Another tribute to the Tchaikowsky Anniversary is offered in a fine collection of the composer's loveliest songs, including Speak Not, O Beloved, None But The Lonely Heart, Aria from Act IV of "The Enchantress," Song of the Gypsy Girl, One Small Word, and others. The artist, Maria Kurenko, who here performs for the first time on Victor Records, is widely celebrated as a concert singer and as an authority on the songs of Tchaikowsky. This collection is of prime interest. Album M-678, 8 sides, \$7.00.

Other Important Items on the July List

Two of Paderewski's most memorable successes, played by the master himself, The "Moonlight" Sonata, by Beethoven, and the pianist's own imperishable "Minuet" ... Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco plays his own superbly atmospheric "Cipressi" ... Ponselle, whose recent return to Victor Records was so heartily welcomed, presents songs by Rimsky-Korsakow and Arensky ... Handel's Sonata No. 6 in E Major receives a magnificent performance at the hands of Yehudi Menuhin. ... The Boston "Pops" Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Fiedler offers musical Americana and spirited Sousa Marches ... High moments from Traviata for your summer opera interlude—sung by a splendid ensemble of leading soloists with the orchestra of La Scala and the famous opera chorus, directed by Sabajno ... Another valuable selection from Sibelius, excerpts from Karelia Suite, performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Walter Goehr ... Songs in Swedish and German projected by the magnificent voice of Jussi Björling. Visit your regular RCA Victor music merchant and hear some of your favorites among the notable Victor recordings for July.

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— P. G.

STRAUSS, Josef: *Music of the Spheres*, Op. 235; played by the Viennese Waltz Orchestra with chorus, conducted by Walter Goehr. Victor disc 36300, price \$1.00.

■ Josef Strauss was a young brother of the waltz king. His waltz *Music of the Spheres* has long been popular and has appeared in a half dozen orchestral versions and one vocal version, sung by Elisabeth Schumann. It is at best a sentimental imitation of Johann's style. In our estimation it is a more enjoyable composition when played by an orchestra than in the present version which includes a chorus. However, those who like *In a Monastery Garden* and similar pieces will no doubt welcome this recording. Goehr does not fully capture the full lilt and sway of the waltz with the chorus, but he does on the whole a commendable job. The recording is good.

—P. G.

TSCHAIKOWSKY: *The Sleeping Beauty*—Ballet *Excerpts*, Op. 66; played by the Sadler's Wells Orchestra, direction Constant Lambert. Victor set M-673, three discs, price \$5.00.

■ The late Mrs. Rosa Newmarch, who did so much to promote interest in Russian music in England, has aptly described this music as "melodious in the best sense of the word, fantastic, brightly colored; while it never descends to the commonplace level of the ordinary ballet music". Tchaikowsky's first ballet was *The Swan Lake*, which he wrote for the directors of the Imperial Theatre in Moscow in 1877. The present ballet, which is a great advancement over the earlier work, was written in 1889 and first produced in St. Petersburg. There are thirty numbers in the score, but only ten are recorded here. The ten, however, undeniably constitute a good cross-section of the work.

The Sleeping Beauty, based on the famous fairy tale, has long been a favorite with the Ballet Russe ever since its revival in London in 1921 by Diaghileff. In its original form it was presented in three acts; but it is also given in a one-act version known as *Aurora's Wedding*. This latter version seems to be the only one that the Ballet Russe has presented in America, although in England the original ballet is consistently given in the three-act form, and is included in the repertory of the Sadler's Wells Theatre Company.

Efrem Kurtz, conductor of the Ballet Russe, has recorded *Aurora's Wedding* (Victor set M-326, reviewed in our January, 1937 issue). There is duplication of numbers between these two sets, but often these are not important since the present set contains more complete versions of them. The portions of the ballet presented here are: *Introduction*, *The Fairy Carabosse*, *The Lilac Fairy*, and *The Six Fairies* (disc 12765); *Valse*, and *The Rose Adagio* (disc 12766); and *Puss in Boots*, *The Diamond and Silver Fairies*, and *Mazurka and Apotheosis* (disc 12767).

This is a fine recording, and the performance is more deftly pointed than was that of Kurtz in the previous set.

— P. G.

Turkey in the Straw; and *Two Irish Reels*; *Irish Jig*; played by Alfredo Campoli and his salon orchestra. Victor 10-inch disc 26600, price 75c.

■ The versatile Alfredo Campoli, who has been recorded as a violin virtuoso in standard concertos, turns up this month as the leader of a salon orchestra. The results will please anyone who enjoys tricked-up arrangements of good old country dance tunes. I do not know who made these versions, and can only offer the negative information that this *Turkey in the Straw* is not Guion's. It is indeed a more varied affair, ringing the changes on the fine old tune in all sorts of tempi and with frequent shifts in tonality. There is, among other things, even a minor variation. The performance is an excellent one of its kind, and the recording is all one could ask.

—P. M.

CONCERTO

BRAHMS: *Concerto No. 1 in D minor*, Op. 15; played by Artur Schnabel and London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Georg Szell. Victor set M-677, six discs, price \$12.00.

■ This set reached us just as we were preparing for press, and we can't spend as much time on it as we would like to. After several careful hearings, however, we have come to the conclusion that it does not necessarily supplant the older Bachaus recording (album M-209, issued in 1934). In this concerto a heroic pianist is needed, and Schnabel could hardly be called a pianist of immense stature. No matter what one thinks of the rather cold-blooded playing of Bachaus, it cannot be denied that he is a great technician who easily surmounts the big moments of the work. His crisp, fluent style is a tremendous asset in a long and arduous concerto like the present one,

for it helps sustain the mood of the music, and that Schnabel is not capable of doing. One has the feeling that he does not feel the work as an entity; here and there he does nice work but the whole does not hang together. Nor is Schnabel an infallible technician. The fortissimo octaves in the first movement are shabbily done, and, as in his version of the second concerto, there is an excess of woodchopping—short, choppy phrasings and over-precision in accompanying passages.

Perhaps the soloist is temperamentally unsuited to Brahms. One does not sense the feeling of pianistic security that is present in his *Emperor Concerto*. In the present work, I must admit that Schnabel follows the music closely, that he observes all the signs, and that the playing is often competent—but that is all, and we are entitled to expect more.

The best playing occurs in the last movement. I've never been in sympathy with those critics who maintained that of the three movements this one is the most lacking in inspiration. There is a swing and vitality here that is often wanting in sections of the previous movements, which sometimes are labored. And surely the rondo is the most pianistic part of the concerto. It goes dashing along with only an occasional pause for breath, and the piano has manifold opportunities for all sorts of display. The superior recording helps greatly; it is much fuller than in the previous set.

As usual in Schnabel sets, there is much vacant space on the discs, and six records are used to Bachaus' five. There would have been no difficulty in recording this concerto on five discs. Can it be that Mr. Schnabel is overly interested in his royalties?

—H. C. S.

RAVEL: *Introduction and Allegro* (or *Septet*) (3 sides); played by Laura Newell (harp), John Wummer (flute), Ralph McLane (clarinet), and the Stuyvesant String Quartet; and DEBUSSY (trans. Grandjany): *Maid with the Flaxen Hair*; played by Laura Newell. Columbia set X-167, \$3.50.

■ One leading New York record store advertises this set as the best classical seller for June. Apparently it caught on immediately after its release. The only other recording of this attractive work dates from about 1928, and the reproduction is not satisfactory, particularly where the harp is concerned. Ravel has written a difficult harp part, one that exploits its different tonal qualities; and these were not fully brought out by the older recording. Some people may be attracted to this

work by the novelty of its instrumentation; in the best sense of the word this composition is undeniably a novelty. But although Ravel could realize the novel in music, he was also able to capture something else—a quality of musicianship as unique and as artistic as it is novel. There is every reason for this set to become a best seller, for it is well played and excellently recorded, and the music is delightfully fashioned.

Ravel wrote this septet in 1906, three years after his quartet. Although known under the title of *Septet* or *Introduction and Allegro*, Ravel might have called this work a harp concerto, for in reality it owns all the characteristics of a concerto for harp with small orchestra. Less imposing than the quartet and the trio (1915), it is nonetheless an attractive work, upon which the composer has lavished his usual fastidious care. The choice of instruments allows for some highly expressive tonal coloring. In style the septet is a blend of the romantic and impressionist schools; and reflects more than in part the spirit of Ravel's teacher, Gabriel Faure. Ravel had a gift for the delicate, whimsical and fanciful; his was the art of the miniature and here we find these qualities attractively set forth. Yet the work is not without its moments of studied artifice.

Laura Newell, the harpist, is already familiar to record buyers as a members of the ensemble known as the New Friends of Music (as are also several members of the Stuyvesant Quartet). She is a competent artist, and I must say I prefer her playing here to her work in the quasi-jazz group. All of associates are also fine musicians. —P. H. R.

CHAMBER MUSIC

HANDEL: *Sonata no. 6, in E major, Op. 1, No. 15*; played by Yehudi Menuhin, violin, with piano accompaniment by Hendrik Endt. Victor disc 16450, price \$2.00.

■ This sonata has always been a particular favorite of mine. Perhaps nowhere in all the music of Handel do we find a more pleasing symmetry or a richer flow of pure melody. There is the customary contrast in the four short movements, but there is at the same time a special impression of continuity and of community between them.

An interesting recording of the work is to be found in the second volume of *L'Anthologie Sonore* (disc 11) where it is played not on a violin but on an oboe. Of course there is an elaborate explanation given, to the ef-

fect that in this music the characteristic timbre of the performing instrument was immaterial to the composer, or at least that if we can find something more appropriate or effective he would have allowed us the liberty of trying it out.

The advantages of the oboe as the interpreter of this sonata seem somehow to be emphasized by this new violin recording. I say seem, because actually the fault here lies with the performer rather than with the instrument he plays. Menuhin has done so much to enrich the phonographic and concert repertoire that I hesitate to admit that I find his record totally lacking in charm. My first reaction to the lovely opening movement was a feeling that he was playing it much too slowly, but I presently realized that it was a matter of curved phrasing rather than tempo. The fact is, I am afraid, that Mr. Menuhin feels no strong affection for this music, or at least his heart was not in it when he made this recording. Old timers may remember an acoustic disc of the first two movements played by Kubelik, which, despite its weaknesses, had something of the quality this record lacks. Kubelik played the *Adagio* a little too rapidly, but his violin sang. Mechanically the new disc is a satisfactory one.

P. M.

MOZART: *Sonata in G major, K. 301—Allegro*: played by Yehudi and Hephzibah Menuhin; and MOZART: *Sonata in B flat, K. 378—Andantino sostenuto*: played by Yehudi and Yalta Menuhin. Victor disc 16106, \$2.00.

■ Here in a single disc is a souvenir of the whole Menuhin family's artistry. Both pieces are played with evident enjoyment by the participants, and for this reason it seems a pity that the entire sonatas were not recorded. This is the first time that Yalta has appeared with her brother on records, and from the evidence offered here she proves herself a worthy member of the Menuhin family. There are several versions of the *B flat Sonata* on discs (one in the Victor catalogue by Heifetz and Bay), but this is the first time that the *G major Sonata* has appeared in any form. The recording here is first-rate.

—P. H. R.

NEUBAUER, FRANZ (1760-1795): *Adagio for Flute and Viola*: played by Marcel Moyse (flute) and Blanche Honegger (viola); and "HANDEL" (SCHULTZE, JOHANN CHRISTOPH): *Sonata for two flutes*:¹ played by Marcel and Louis Moyse. Victor disc No. 12492, price \$1.50.

■ The Neubaur (not Neubauer) work is charming, and it is excellently recorded. The music, in the manner of Joseph Haydn, exploits with great artistry the potentialities of both instruments.

This *adagio* derives from a Sonata for violin and viola in B flat (No. 3 in the edition from which Altmann reprinted three sonatas: Op. 10). The viola-part carefully follows the original; but the flute-part is a fortuitously-unnatural transcription.

The *Sonata for Two Flutes*, excellently recorded, derives from a publication² edited by the French flutist, Louis Fleury. Fleury's source was an 18th-century publication,³ labelled with Handel's name. From the stylistic content, scholars have known for some time that these sonatas could not possibly have been composed by Handel. This theory was confirmed recently.⁴

In this connection, it is necessary that the major recording companies be reminded again that such errors of fact have in recent years become the rule rather than the exception. Much can be done to correct this condition: the editing of historical information by competent scholars, prior to the labelling process, is not only an essential for the record collectors of serious music, but also, it should be an indication of the superiority of the company's product.

—Dr. J. M. Coopersmith

POWELL: *Sonata Virginianesque, Op. 7*: played by Eddy Brown (violin) and John Powell (piano). Three Royale 10-inch discs 1870/72, price 75c each.

■ John Powell is a Virginian by birth, and has long been interested in the folk music of the South and more particularly of his home state. He has been actively connected with the White Top Festival, held annually at Bristol, Virginia, for the past nine years. The present sonata was the first composition of his to receive wide recognition. It is music

1. Or rather, two movements from "Sonata I, in E minor" (of the original edition): III, "Lento" IV, "Allegretto."

2. "Oeuvres Originales des XVII^e et XVIII^e Siècles Pour la Flûte, I. Sonate à 2 Flûtes sans basse. G. F. Haendel" (Paris: Alphonse Leduc & Cie., 1928).

3. "Six Sonatas à deux Flûtes traversière sans Basse. Par Mr. Handel. . . A Paris Chez Me. Boivin. . . [et] Mr. Le Clerc. . ." [circa 1771].

4. By E. H. Meyer, in his article, "Has Handel Written Works for Two Flutes without a Bass?" "Music and Letters," Vol. XVI, pp. 293-295 (London, 1935).

that recalls Grieg, and even Brahms; but this is a stylistic rather than a thematic reminiscence. The composition is said to be based on genuine American folk tunes, although only one of these is identified—the theme upon which the second movement is based.

The first movement, entitled *In the Quarters*, is intended to give a picture of the slaves' quarters. The second, *In the Woods*, is based on a tune which has been traced back to a pagan Cornish hymn; and the final movement, called *At the Big House*, is a country dance, recalling the Virginia Reel. The music is pleasantly melodic and atmospheric.

With the composer at the piano it can be assumed that we have an authentic performance of the work. Both artists play well, although it can hardly be said that Brown does full justice to the prevalent romanticism of the music. The recording is good.

—P. H. R.

* * *

SCHUBERT: *Quartet No. 15 in G major, Op. 161*; played by the New York Philharmonic String Quartet. Royale album 39, four discs, price \$4.50.

■ All of us speak in bated breath about Beethoven's last period, and rightly so; but

many of us forget that about the same time, in the same city, Schubert was composing music almost comparable in scope. Always a supreme melodist, Schubert, in the last years of his life, turned to music of a greater breadth and stature, and the present quartet, the C major Quintet, and the Symphony in C, all among his later works, were written in a new and reflective idiom. Allied to the unparalleled melodic gifts was a new largeness of conception and a groping for new forms that was similar to Beethoven's last quartets. True, the latter works transcend all other chamber music; but the composer was fifty-seven years old, and had a vast technical and emotional background. If Schubert wrote this quartet at the age of twenty-nine, what would he not have done in later years? Music lovers are tortured by his deathbed remark that there were new themes on his head which he wished he could get on paper.

As is well known, Schubert, shortly before his death, intended to study form and counterpoint. The conception of the spontaneous Franz studying form is analogous to harnessing Pegasus to a junk wagon. For Schubert, among the most natural of all composers, would have discovered everything by himself as he experimented with new forms. Now, it cannot be

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denied that in the present quartet there are structural faults, repetition, and much general diffuseness. But that matters little; form notwithstanding it is one of the greatest pieces of chamber music, and rightfully takes its place next to the last quartets of Beethoven. Like the latter, its conception is almost too great for the form, and massive themes struggle for freedom from the slender confines of the four stringed instruments. Schubert, one feels, conceived this work symphonically.

The composer being Schubert, there is a continual flow of melody; but in addition there is a personal and gripping touch of tragedy that is far removed from, say, the elegiac melancholy of the D minor Quartet. The opening theme of the slow movement is so poignant as to be almost impersonal; music like this is beyond good or evil.

In 1935 the Kolisch Quartet recorded this work for Columbia. That version was the sole example of the quartet in American lists. The Kolisch, I suppose, is probably a better ensemble than the Royale foursome—at least from the standpoint of technique. They have a superior dynamic range, and better balance all around. However, I prefer the more robust interpretation of the New York Philharmonic Quartet to the refined and elegant, but somewhat negative approach of the Kolisch group. The present quartet digs more into the heart of the music; and while their dynamic range could be bettered—there is a rather monotonous flow between mezzo-forte and fortissimo—they more closely approximate the surge and restless spirit of the composition. The recording could be much better. Some of it emerged in a resonant and full manner, but at times there was a fuzziness and diffusion of tone that I could correct only by turning the volume nearly to the maximum, much to the distress of those within range.

—H. C. S.

* * *

SMETANA: *Quartet No. 1 in E minor (From My Life)*; played by the Primrose Quartet. Victor set M-675, seven sides, \$7.00.

■ Columbia recently introduced another American ensemble in a recording of this same work. Here, again, we have an auspicious debut of an American string quartet. Our readers probably are familiar with the artistry of William Primrose, one of the foremost viola players now before the public. Born in Glasgow, Scotland, Primrose studied the violin under the great Belgian violinist, Eugene Ysaye. Later, on the advice of Ysaye and

others, Primrose changed from the violin to the viola.

Since the break-up of the London String Quartet in which he was the viola player, it has been his secret ambition to found his own quartet. The opportunity to do this was not found, however, until he joined the National Broadcasting Company and became associated with the NBC Symphony Orchestra. Here he was able to find the right combination of personalities. Although all four men are technically proficient musicians, Primrose states it was not a mastery of technique that united the four of them, but a union of temperament; "from the first, we four just naturally 'clicked'."

The second violinist of the quartet, Joseph Gingold, is also a Ysaye pupil. He is already known for his admirable artistry on records—he has played the Bloch *Sonata* for Victor and the Francaix *Sonatine* for The Friends of Recorded Music. Oscar Shumsky, the first violinist, was well known in concert in Europe before he joined the violin section of the NBC Symphony; and Harvey Shapiro, the cellist, first attracted public attention by winning the Loeb and Naumberg prizes.

Comparing this performance with that of the Curtis String Quartet (reviewed in our May issue) we find the individual playing here by far the best, but that does not necessarily mean better ensemble playing. As a matter of fact there is very little to choose from between the sets, since the interpretations of both are to a marked degree similar. Both stress the *appassionata* aspect of the opening movement, but the greater speed of the Primrose ensemble imparts an unfortunate metronomic quality to the opening section. Neither set realizes the melting qualities of the lyric second theme as did the Flonzaleys. In the remaining three movements the Primrose Quartet, in our opinion, gives a more suave performance; their technical skill gives them the edge. This is particularly noticeable in the second section of the scherzo, and in the slow movement, where they catch more of the yearning spirit.

The quality of the recording is quite different from that of the Curtis set. Here the reproduction is more intimate and less full and opulent; and there are frequent places where the tone of the two violins is far too attenuated for its own good, as in the slow movement. Although the quality of the recording in the Curtis set is, as we have stated, extraordinarily impressive, there is room for the criticism of some readers that it is too

full; and indeed, sections of the Polka do emerge in a somewhat ponderous fashion, suggesting the playing of a small orchestra rather than a string quartet. Certainly the dancelike sections in the present recording are lighter in character without losing any of the spirit.

—P. H. R.

VIOLIN

PAGANINI: *Caprices Nos. 1-2—V'ol. 1*; played by Ossy Renardy, violinist, accompanied by Walter Robert. Victor set M-672, three discs, price \$6.50.

Victor, on the cover of the album, has announced this set as commemorating the 150th anniversary of Paganini's death. Since Paganini died in 1840 there must have been a slight mixup in Victor's higher mathematics department. Be that as it may, it is unfortunate that we had to wait until a centenary commemoration for the release of some of the most significant things in violin literature; and this album may help remove the stigma of pedagogy from the *Caprices* and place them where they belong—with the Liszt etudes.

The 24 *Caprices, Op. 1*, in the repertory of every advanced violin student, have been called a lexicon of Paganini's violin technique. They are about the most difficult things any artist can attempt; save harmonics, every device used in modern technique is found there in every conceivable form. But as a matter of fact they are not the essence of his method. Paganini repeatedly declared that there was a secret formula, known only by himself, that would enable a violinist in a brief time to attain the heights of finger dexterity. He even intended publishing that secret, but death intervened. That Paganini did possess a secret Edgar Istel (Musical Quarterly, January 1930) has no doubt. In an interesting article, he points out, among other things, that nobody ever heard the violinist practise—"So it can scarcely be doubted that Paganini had an original method . . . which enabled him in a comparatively short time and without wasting time and strength to arrive at remarkable results in finger training." But this secret, Istel concludes, was largely explained by Paganini's mental and physical makeup, which no student ever could imitate. Surely no living violinist can take in one bow four D's, in the octave across the four strings, by pressing four strings with the first, second, third, and fourth fingers.

It is important to realize that Paganini was not a charlatan, but the greatest violinist who

ever lived. True, he was a showman; but no mere sensationalist could have maintained the respect of all of the great musical figures of the age. As a composer he was less notable, but the *Caprices* will last as long as there are violinists. Musically they are not very superior (although not as devoid of merit as many would have us believe); their value lies in the electrifying effect when played by a great violinist, and then they emerge as the apex of brilliance. After all, one of the tests of music is in audience reaction, and I have never heard them played in concert without arousing tremendous enthusiasm. For the same reason the *Etudes* of Liszt are important; both Paganini and Liszt are the summation of the techniques of their respective instruments and their music, well played, will arouse an esthetic response if only for the appreciation of a tour de force.

And Renardy makes a tour de force out of all in the album. Let nobody be mistaken: Renardy is a great technician who simply revels in the manifold difficulties of the *Caprices*. In No. 6, a tremolo study, the results are amazing, and one could easily mistake the soloist's acrobatics for a trio of frenzied violins. A piano accompaniment is used; Paganini wrote the work for solo violin, but Ferdinand David later introduced a simple accompaniment, and it is probably David's version that Renardy uses. The notes give no information concerning that point. I do not like the piano, for it detracts from the fireworks and is totally unnecessary in music of this kind. For here the emphasis is solely on execution of a transcendent nature, with the soloist triumphing in direct ratio with his digital equipment. Renardy is aided by fine recording. Violin students, of course, will want this album; I recommend it to all as an exciting set from the bow of a brilliant violinist. —H.C.S.

* * *

SCHUBERT, arr. Franco: *Valse Sentimentale*; and **KREISLER: *Rondino on a Theme by Beethoven***; played by Wladimir Selinsky, accompanied by Samuel Itkis. Brunswick 10-inch disc 8509, price 75c.

Both of these selections were very popular in the early days of recording. Kreisler himself, as well as Francescatti, Morini, Quiroga, Elman and others have recorded the *Rondino*, while the Elman version of the *Valse Sentimentale* is still in the Victor lists. There's nothing very important in these two salon pieces, and Selinsky sighs through them in a lush manner. He has a full warm tone, and his somewhat saccharine approach does not, in this case, detract from the music. —P. G.

KEYBOARD

ARENSKY: *Romance* from *First Suite*; and BEETHOVEN, arr. Thern: *Turkish March* from *Ruins of Athens*: played by Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson, duo-pianists. Columbia 10-inch disc 17198-D, price \$1.00.

■ The recent activities of two-piano teams in the recording studios almost amounts to a renaissance. Columbia continues this month with their popular English couple in two selections that always crop up in recitals of this order. Arensky wrote three two-piano suites, of which only the first maintains itself in the repertoire—chiefly by virtue of a very enjoyable waltz. There is some pleasant music in the *Romance*, however, and the previous recording, made by the same couple, has been withdrawn (several versions of the *Waltz* still exist). Since this is the only recording available domestically, so far as I know, it does fill a gap; although it is regrettable that the whole suite was not recorded as an entity. The Beethoven transcription on the reverse side tinkles away prettily.

Bartlett and Robertson are up to their usual high standard. As always, their playing is typically English—well bred and quiet, with a hint of reserve. There is always clean playing and delicate articulation; and I never have heard them tear a passion to tatters. I like the way their fingers go smoothly over the keys, and their sparing use of the pedal. They may not be the most imposing team in existence, but they surely are among the most dependable from the standpoint of balance and interpretation, and they can always be relied upon for a sane and healthy exposition. —H. C. S.

* * *

BEETHOVEN: *Adagio* from *Sonata in C sharp min.*, Op. 27, No. 2 (*Moonlight*); and PADEREWSKI: *Minuet in G*, Op. 14, No. 1; played by Paderewski. Victor disc 16250, price \$2.00.

■ This record displaces the old Paderewski disc with the same selections (Victor 6690). In the pianist's album of the *Moonlight Sonata* (M-349) the last side was occupied by the *Minuet*, and it seems likely that the present disc is a repressing of the first and last sides of the album. There is little to be said about the interpretation. Paderewski is a pianist of the old school; his continual breaking of chords, his everlasting rubato, and his fondness for bringing out inner voices, no matter how vestigial, are familiar to all who know his style. Neither selection taxes his strength, and

a person who likes the artist will want this disc as a memento—that is, if he does not possess the album set. The performance of the *Minuet*, incidentally, is marked by all manners of ritards and rubati; if any other pianist were the soloist we would indignantly point out the exaggerations, but since the composer is the performer, and since one may assume that he wishes it played thus, we can but shrug our shoulders and resign ourselves to the worst if students hear the disc and try to imitate it. —H. C. S.

* * *

CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO: *Cipressi* (*Remembering the Cypressess of Usigliano di Sari*); played by Mario Castelnovo-Tedesco, piano. Victor disc 16449, price \$2.00.

■ Very few compositions by Castelnovo-Tedesco have been recorded, and all of those are among his minor pieces. Indeed, his music, outside of an occasional performance of the *Overture to The Taming of the Shrew*, is seldom presented in the United States. The composer, incidentally, now lives in this country. Born in 1895, he studied under Pizzetti; and not long after he had achieved a considerable European reputation. Most critics are agreed in calling him a romantic, and the present selection, with a strong undercurrent of impressionism, testifies to this. *Cipressi*, composed in 1920, shows more than a suggestion of Debussy, especially toward the end, where an elaborate figure is treated in a similar fashion to the figure in *La Terrasse des audiences au clair de lune*. This is not sheer imitation; there is much individuality in the music. I would not rank it among the important contributions to keyboard literature, but within its limitations there is a good deal of sensitivity and a real impressionistic quality.

The composer's excellent pianism will come as no surprise to those who heard him last season as soloist with the New York Philharmonic. Especially notable here is his colorful and masterful treatment of the pedals, which adds immeasurably to the mood of the composition. The recording is very clear.

—H. C. S.

VOCAL

ALFVEN: *Skogen sover*; and OKLOF: *Morgon*; SCHUBERT: *An die Leier*, Op. 56, No. 2; sung by Jussi Bjoerling, tenor, with piano accompaniment by Harry Ebert. Victor disc 12831, price \$1.50.

■ Mr. Bjoerling is to be thanked this month for his unusual and worthwhile choice of recording material. All three of these songs

deserve to be better known than they are. The Alfven will be familiar to a limited number of people who made its acquaintance through an Iragen record issued three years ago, sung by Helen Snow. Mr. Bjoerling is not unnaturally better recorded than Miss Snow, though he does not succeed in capturing the dreamy mood of the song so completely as she. The tenor has a lovely *mezza voce*, but the enveloped quality of the soprano's voice was ideally suited to this music. In the patriotic *Morgon* Bjoerling's voice assumes an almost baritone quality. Naturally he sings with the greatest conviction. This melody cries for a great chorus, so the singer gives all he has.

An die Leier is among the finest of Schubert's songs. It cannot honestly be said that its fully glory shines forth from this disc, for after all Bjoerling is an opera singer, and he has not as yet fully grasped the requirements of great lieder interpretation. The inner conviction that brings intimacy to even such "big" songs as this is something he has not yet learned how to convey. The section *Doch meine Saiten tönen* is taken a shade too fast, and suffers considerably thereby, although the tenor handles the difficult high *nur Liebe* very well. A lack of imagination on the part of

Mr. Ebert, which permits him to rush the magnificent postlude adds the final touch to this not quite satisfactory performance.

The recording of the voice is full and clear, and the balance is good.

* * *

CAPUA: *O sole mio*; and MARIO: *Santa Lucia luntana*; sung by Nino Martini, tenor, with orchestra conducted by Howard Barlow. Columbia 10-inch disc 17197D, \$1.00.

■ It will be a real surprise if Mr Martini's new series of Columbia records unearths for us any unusual music. The tenor shines in such tidbits as these, and they are the stuff which will please his admirers. He has fared better in his present connection than he did in the recordings he made for Victor, for here the voice is not over-amplified, and it is well supported by a richly reproduced orchestra. It is not naturally a big voice, but it has characteristic charm which is easily recognizable on this disc. *Santa Lucia luntana* gives him a good chance to demonstrate his skill at spinning a tone, and *O sole mio* provides the occasion for some good frank and open singing. If we accept sliding up to a note as a legitimate part of the Italian singer's equipment (it is less pronounced in Mr. Martini's singing than in that of some of his

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co-tenors) we must stamp this disc as vocally and stylistically good.

P. M.

GILBERT and SULLIVAN: *Trial by Jury*; presented by the National Light Opera Company, direction Harold Sanford. Royale set 42, four discs, price \$4.50.

■ It was in June, 1929 that the D'Oyly Carte Company recorded *Trial by Jury*. That is a long time ago, measured by modern recording standards, and the enterprising Royale company has engaged Harold Sanford and his company to present Gilbert and Sullivan, in up-to-date recordings. We remember the National Light Opera Company as featured performers, several years ago, on the NBC network; and their work was very good. So it is a pleasure to meet them again on records.

The principals in the present performance are Walter Preston (Judge), Margaret Daum (Angelina), Edward Wolter (Usher), Fred Hufsmith (Edwin), Colin O'More (Counsel for the defendant), and Harry Donaghy (Foreman of the Jury). A sturdy little chorus acquits itself nobly.

Comparisons between this set and the old Victor one are necessary, because the D'Oyly Carte Company is the standard for all Gilbert and Sullivan devotees. And, with no disparagement of Sanford's troupe, the English outfit is inimitable. Not only have they the authenticity, but every singer is an artist and an accomplished actor—a rare combination. Moreover, they manage to act with their voices and suggest by vocal means the spirit of their characters. Now, while vocally the Royale artists are eminently acceptable, they fail to suggest as much as do the D'Oyly Cartes. The Usher in the latter group is superior to Edward Wolter not because he has the better voice, but because of his real English accent and characterization. Similarly Walter Preston's vigorous singing is better than Leo Shefffield's, but the latter gives a more faithful vocal dramatization of the testy old judge. *Trial by Jury* is typically English, and needs the English atmosphere.

Nevertheless I listened with keen enjoyment to the singing, and to the ever-fresh lyrics of Gilbert. All of the performers in the present set are good. Hufsmith compares favorably with George Baker. His is an ideal Gilbert and Sullivan voice—light, fresh, and flexible. Both Walter Preston and Margaret Daum perform surely and easily. Most important of all, the diction of soloists and chorus is as good, and in some places better, than that of the D'Oyly Carte. Too, the recording is better

(although not so pronounced as one would imagine).

And now for the big defect of the album. For some inexplicable reason, the sponsors saw fit to replace the orchestra with a Hammond organ, played by George Shackley, thereby taking away a good part of the enjoyment from an otherwise praiseworthy set. The unwieldy and ponderous accompaniments are often ludicrous; one need but listen to the opening chorus in the Victor set to realize the loss. In the Defendant's first solo, Sullivan's light and tripping um-pa-pa is turned into a leaden, clumsy background, and in other places the delicate and imaginative instrumental effects are completely lost or caricatured. This reviewer, an enthusiastic Savoyard, tearfully begs the sponsors not to let this happen again in forthcoming G & S albums. —P. G.

LEONCAVALLO: *Pagliacci—Prologo*; sung by Apollo Granforte with the La Scala Orchestra. Victor disc 36299, price \$1.00.

■ Granforte was a splendid artist in his time (I do not profess to know whether or not he is still singing in Italy, but in the 1920's he was one of the foremost baritones there). There may be some who own this recording at the present time; it was issued in 1928 in the Victor Red Seal section—numbered 6769. It is one of the best recorded versions of the famous *Prologo*. The recording of the voice is good, and the orchestra even though not as full as it is today in records is nonetheless satisfactory. Although Granforte does not sing the interpolated high A flat in the latter part of the aria, he nevertheless sings a full round top G in the last phrase. —P. H. R.

RIMSKY-KORSAKOW: *The Nightingale and the Rose, Op. 2, no. 2*; and ARENSKY: *On Wings of Dream*; sung by Rosa Ponselle, soprano, with piano accompaniment by Romano Romani, and violin obbligato in the Arensky by Mischa Violin. Victor disc 16451, \$2.00.

■ As in her April disc, which marked her return to the studios after a long absence, Miss Ponselle here demonstrates that she has still few rivals as far as sheer vocal glory is concerned. Still I find this record disappointing, for I had been led by the last release to expect a keener grasp of the subtleties of song-singing. The trouble seems to be partly in the language, for the English translations of these Russian songs are hardly models either of literature or of singability, and the singer gives the impression of being a bit embarrassed by the necessity of pronouncing the text dis-

finetly. But this hardly explains her complete failure to set a mood in the Arensky song where a mood is so necessary.

The Nightingale and the Rose, otherwise *Eastern (or Oriental) Romance*, is one of Rimsky-Korsakow's most celebrated lieder. Though it has not lacked recordings, the version in Vladimir Rosing's collection of Russian songs (Decca) is the only American listing since the vanishing of Nina Koshetz's acoustic Brunswick disc. Ponselle follows the common practise of humming the postlude which Rimsky wrote for the piano. Her sins include an overdone portamento, and a Brooklyn pronunciation of such words as *singing*.

The Arensky song was a favorite of Sembrich under the title *But Lately in Dance I Embraced Her* (and was recorded acoustically under this title by Alda) and used to figure on Matzenauer's programs as *On Wings of Dream*. It has also been recorded in Russian by a soprano named Sprishevskaya on an early electric Victor record known simply as *Waltz*. Miss Ponselle is impartial, using Matzenauer's title and Sembrich's text—taking care, however, to change the gender of the pronoun. The poem represents a lover lost in remembrance of the last dance before the death of his beloved. Arensky's background is, as it

would have to be, a catchy waltz, whose very innocuousness gives point to the idea. The middle section is sombre, with more than a suggestion of Schubert's *Doppelgänger*. Added to the full-blooded singing we have here a distinctly unspiritual violin obbligato. Again Miss Ponselle finishes the song by humming the postlude. Mr. Romani's piano accompaniments are rather tentative and thinly recorded.

—P. M.

TSCHAIKOWSKY: *Song recital: Speak not, O beloved*, Op. 6, no. 2; *None but the lonely heart*, Op. 6, no. 6 (disc 2093); *So soon forgotten (Romance no. 9)*; *The Enchantress: Aria from Act IV* (disc 2094); *'Twas you alone*, Op. 57, no. 6; *Song of the gypsy girl* Op. 60, no. 7; *Complaint of the bride*, Op. 47, no. 7 (disc 16417); *One small word*, Op. 28, no. 6; *At the ball*, Op. 38, no. 3; *Children's song*, Op. 54, no. 16 (disc 16418); sung by Maria Kurenko, soprano, with piano accompaniment by Sergei Tanowsky. Victor set M-678, two 10-inch and two 12-inch discs, price \$7.00.

■ Victor celebrates the Tschaiakowsky centenary with this recital of his songs, hoping to convince us, according to the booklet, that this composer has other fine lieder to his credit than the eternal *Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt*

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VIEWS AND REVIEWS

QUARTERLY BOOK-LIST

QUARTERLY RECORD-LIST

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(*None but the lonely heart*). The inevitable reaction after listening to the ten songs in the set (or more properly nine songs and an opera air) is that the hardy perennial is the least impressive of the lot, and that several rise to real heights. It cannot be claimed for Tschaiikowsky that he was a composer of infinite variety, and the prevailing note of this collection is a characteristically mournful one. Still, when all is said and done, each song has an individuality strong enough to set it apart from its fellows—and this in spite of the repeated use of certain structural devices. The obligato song—that is, a song with an independent melodic accompaniment—is perhaps the most typical of his workmanship, and there are several examples here. But each song is a miniature drama, and each seems fresh and individual as long as it holds the stage. For my own personal favorites I would name *Speak not, O beloved, So soon forgotten* and *Complaint of the bride*, all of which are splendidly sung by the present artist.

Most of the songs are new to records, so that there need be no fear of serious duplications in large collections. Aside from *Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt*, which has been done by nearly everybody (including Mme. Kurenko herself in the days when she recorded for Columbia) only *At the ball* and *Speak not, O beloved* have been easily available in recent years. The latter is included in Rosing's Decca Russian song recital, and the former is sung on Victor 1652 by Povla Frijsh in a manner not likely to be approached, although she uses a French translation. The *Complaint of the bride* (*Was I not a tender blade of grass?*) was done by Xenia Belmas on a not too well-recorded Polydor disc, and for *One small word* (otherwise *The fateful moment*) we may go back to the early acoustic of the silvery-voiced Marie Michailowa. In the last named song Kurenko overdramatizes somewhat at the expense of the piano melody which needs to flow freely on its own course.

There is always bound to be some curiosity about the condition of a singer's voice when she has been absent from the studios for a period of ten years or so. In the case of Mme. Kurenko it can be said that she never sounded better than on these records. The voice always had a tendency to shrillness in the upper reaches, but she compensated by musical intelligence and dramatic feeling. The songs here are sung with real conviction; we can feel their message though we may not know a word of the language. The ability to convey this feeling is certainly one of the best gifts a singer can have. —P. M.

VERDI: *La Traviata: Brindisi, Act I; and Funiculi, Act II—Ah, si! che feci!*; sung by Anna Rozsa, (soprano), Alessandro Ziliani, (tenor), Olga De Franco, (soprano), L. Borgonovo, (baritone) and A. Gelli, (bass), with La Scala Chorus and Orchestra, conducted by Carlo Sabajno. Victor disc 12832, price \$1.50.

■ This release would seem to be a new combination of two sides from Victor's *Traviata* set, which, since it was issued in 1932, is hardly a novelty any longer. The performance is competent if not distinguished, and the recording carries its years rather lightly. There was room in the catalogue for a single disc containing these particular favorite passages, and an easy way for Victor to get it was by repressing. —P. M.

POPULAR PRICED ALBUMS

PATRIOTIC SONGS OF AMERICA; sung by Victor Mixed Chorus, dir. Emil Côté. Victor set P-24 three 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

■ The selections in this album are: *America the Beautiful*, and *The Star Spangled Banner* (disc 26586); *America, Columbia the Gem of the Ocean*, and *Hail Columbia* (disc 26587); and *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, and *Dirie*. The recording is good.

* * *

SIBELIUS MELODIES; played by the Victor Salon Orchestra, conducted by Nathaniel Shilkret. Victor set P-23 three 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

■ In the typical traditions of Hollywood, Shilkret has taken six Sibelius melodies and arranged them in a manner to please those who like this sort of thing. The selections are *Finlandia* (*Melody*), with a vocal quintet, and melodies from *Scaramouche* (*Pantomime*) (disc 26583); *Valse Triste*, and *Caprice, Op. 24, No. 3* (disc 26584); *The Tryst, Op. 37, No. 5*, and *Romance, Op. 24, No. 9* (disc 26585). Although several of these pieces have not appeared previously on records, particularly those chosen from his piano literature, it could hardly be expected that the serious admirer of Sibelius' music would welcome these distortions of the original works. The recording could hardly be bettered.

There is room for an album of Sibelius' piano music and we would like to suggest that Victor give us one. Perhaps the admirable Mr. Sanromá could be induced to make this set.

* * *

VIOLIN FAVORITES; played by Frederic Fradkin (violin) and Helen E. Myers (piano).

Victor set P-22, three 10-inch discs, \$2.50. ■ Fradkin, formerly with the Boston Symphony, is an admirable violinist who has an ingratiating tonal quality. He plays the popular violin pieces in this album without unduly stressing their sentimental qualities; and his pianist gives him comparable accompaniments.

The set contains the following selections: *Le Cygne* (Saint-Saëns), and *Valse Bluette* (Drigo) (disc 26558); *Poème* (Fibich), and *Fransquita—Serenade* (Lehar-Kreisler) (disc 26559); and *The Old Refrain* (Mattullath-Kreisler), and *Souvenir* (Drdla) (disc 26560).

The recording here is excellently contrived. This is by far the best set of its kind in the popular priced albums.

WALTZ TIME IN VIENNA — *Eight waltzes*; played by Al Goodman and his Orchestra. Columbia set C-17, four 10-inch discs, \$2.50.

■ Those who found Goodman's album *Strauss Waltzes in Dance Tempo* desirable will like this companion set. The selections are *Merry Widow*, and *Sari* (disc 35503); *The Skaters*, and *Estudiantina Waltz* (disc 35504); *Waltz Dream*, and *Carmen Sylva* (disc 35505); and *Count of Luxembourg* and *You and You*

from *The Bat* (disc 35506). For dancing versions of these waltzes they are highly satisfactory.

ERIN GO BRAGH—*Songs of the Emerald Isle*; sung by Morton Downey with Orchestra directed by Nat Brandwynne. Columbia set C-16, four 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

■ Here we have eight traditional Irish tunes in versions familiar to radio listeners. After hearing John McCormack sing many of these songs, Morton Downey's crooning fails to impress us. It is not that his voice lacks the essential masculinity that McCormack evidenced, though certainly this is true; but more important is the fact that he is guilty of breaking up the rhythmic line of the songs and otherwise distorting the music. However, all people before the public have their admirers and those who like Mr. Downey will undoubtedly welcome this album. The songs are *My Wild Irish Rose*, and *When Irish Eyes Are Smiling* (disc 35493); *Where the River Shannon Flows*, and *The Rose of Tralee* (disc 35494); *Kevin Barry*, and *Molly Branigan* (disc 35495); and *It's the Same Old Shillalah*, and *That's How I Spell I-r-e-l-a-n-d* (disc 35496).

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SWING MUSIC NOTES

ENZO ARCHETTI

■ Here we are in the middle of Summer and as usual jazz has fled from the City. And just as some of the best of Broadway's musical shows have gone to the World's Fair, or have been rivaled by Fair shows, so has jazz set up competition in the Flushing Meadows. The center of attraction there, as far as jazz-lovers are concerned, is the Dancing Campus in the Amusement Area. Here some of the best name-bands have appeared or are scheduled to appear. Among the names known so far are: Harry James, Glenn Miller, Gene Krupa, and Bob Zurke plus a few others whose standing as jazz musicians is openly poo-pooed.

Last year jitterbugs got their jazz free. This year they must pay but the cost is modest enough considering the quality of music they are getting.

It comes officially from Victor that they are preparing to record Otto Cesana's *Symphony in Swing*. This is the work which received its premiere at a Carnegie Hall Concert on June 8, 1939 under the baton of Gene Goldkette and which was received with an equal number of cheers and Bronx cheers by the critics.

Charlie Barnet and his orchestra will do the recording and it will probably run to three twelve inch discs. Up to now, jazz has not run over two twelve inch records in its most ambitious forms, unless we want to consider Gershwin's Piano Concerto in the same class.

Tempo, the leading jazz magazine of the Pacific coast has been absorbed by *Down Beat*, the most popular of jazz papers in America. *Tempo* was one year older than *Down Beat*, but it never reached quite the same position as its competitor in the jazz lover's favor. Its last issue was May 3rd.

Harvard University, always the center of much jazz activity, is again doing something different. A group of devotees have begun a series of broadcasts from Cambridge's one and only station: one with records, to illustrate the development of jazz and to demonstrate the styles of various musicians; and the other with living musicians known as Johnny Harlow, Hal Jacobs, Mile Segal, Joe Hickey, Eddie Hunt, George Olsen, Charles Miller, and Mike Levin, who do the jamming.

King Porter Stomp (Morton); and *Bachelor Blues*. Blue Note 10-inch disc 503, price \$1.00.

Guitar in High; and *Blues Without Words*. Blue Note 10-inch disc 504, price \$1.00. Both played by Teddy Bunn, guitar.

■ When Hugues Panassié came to America he was quite naturally besieged with requests for his opinion concerning the best living jazz players. His choice for guitarist was Teddy Bunn, and he substantiated his opinion by choosing him to assist in the making of the now classic series for Blue Bird. Panassié's opinion is again substantiated by these records, which show that Teddy's art as a solo player is no less great than his virtues as an ensemble man.

The two outstanding records are the blues: good old, low-down, twelve bar blues! Both are a combination of singing and playing that are a delight to the ear. *Blues Without Words* are not strictly without words because there is a short chorus, but most of it is humming and strumming. *King Porter Stomp* sounds a little strange as a guitar solo but it doesn't take long to realize that the spirit is there. *Guitar in High* is a stunt piece to show off Teddy's complete mastery of the guitar. After the other three sides, that was hardly necessary.

If I Could Be With You (Creamer-Johnson); and *That's A Plenty* (Pollack). H.R.S. disc 2002, price \$1.50.

Sweet Sue, Just You (Harry-Young); and *Squeeze Me* (Williams-Waller). H. R. S. disc 2003, price \$1.50. Both played by the Bechet-Spanier Big Four.

■ Everything that was said previously about the first two Bechet-Spanier releases can be repeated here doubly underscored and italicized. All one can do is to listen with open-mouthed wonder at Bechet's remarkable clarinet and sax work. Listen to *That's A Plenty* to be convinced. As long as H.R.S. continues to supply such records, we don't have to worry about what the big companies turn out for juke-box consumption. By all means, don't miss these records if you really are interested in good jazz.

Commodore had another recording session which included Muggsy Spanier, Max Kaminsky, Miff Mole, Brad Gowans, Pee Wee Russell, Joe Marsala, Bud Freeman, Jess Stacy, Eddie Condon, George Wettling, and Artie Shapiro. A four twelve-inch record jam session was recorded. That sounds like big doings.

IN THE POPULAR VEIN

Horace Van Norman

AAAA—*I Can't Resist You*, and *The Breeze and I*. Hal Kemp and his Orchestra. Victor 26615.

■ These are commercial dance recordings at their best. Both are considerably better than average tunes. *The Breeze and I*, in fact, having been an excellent melody ever since Leguina first wrote it under the title of *Andalucia*. Kemp's orchestrations are ornate with devices filched from here and there but mostly from Ravel, but all are extremely effective. The general musical level of this band is unquestionably a high one, a bit too high, I fear, to enable it to reach the same degree of popularity attained by such charlatans as Sammy Kaye and his ilk.

AAAA—*Louisiana Purchase*, and *Outside of That I Love You*. Ray Noble and his Orchestra. Columbia 35507.

■ Not infrequently, the biggest number in a musical show turns out to be something quite different from what the authors and the producers originally planned. This is obviously the case with Irving Berlin's score from *Louisiana Purchase*, in which the title number was apparently considered of secondary importance at the start. Indeed, it is not even included in the album of tunes from the show issued by Royale while it was playing its out-of-town tryouts. It is, however, the most thoroughly effective, show-stopping number of them all, the number which leaves the most lasting impression upon one seeing the show. Of the two recordings of the number available, Noble's is by far the most successful in capturing the spirit of the number as it's presented in the show even though it is a rather annoying and unsatisfactory recording in many respects. The continuity of the tune is broken up into small fragments, but the essential "low-down" quality is admirably projected, as is the spirited he-and-she number on the reverse, *Outside of That I Love You*.

AAAA—*Concerto for Cootie*, and *Me and You*. Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. Victor 26598.

■ The word "concerto" is something of a misnomer here. "Concerto" generally implies technical display, but of that there is little or none at all. It is, instead, a quiet, nostalgic

tune in typical Ellington vein which Cootie Williams plays with a superb artistry. Not the least conspicuous feature is the variety of tone color he achieves. The whole recording, of course, is done with the same high degree of technical finish that characterizes all the discs that Ellington has been doing lately, and is just one more in the amazingly long list of Grade A recordings that this truly amazing figure has turned out.

AAA—*The Lord Done Fixed Up My Soul*, and *You're Lonely and I'm Lonely*. Kate Smith. Columbia 35501.

■ Running *Louisiana Purchase* a not too close second in effectiveness in the score of the show of the same name is *The Lord Done Fixed Up My Soul*. A spiritual of the boisterous, hallelujah, revival meetin' type, it is sung with enormous verve and tonal brilliance by the ineffable Kate in an arrangement that closely duplicates the one in the show. And it is extremely agreeable to hear the lovely *You're Lonely and I'm Lonely* chanted by a singer worthy of the name after hearing it gargled by such heroic vocalists as Zorina and Victor Moore.

AAA—*Till Tom Special*, and *Shades of Jade*. Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra. Victor 26604.

■ Pleasing recordings by this small combination out of Goodman's band. *Till Tom Special* seems somewhat less effective in full orchestral garb than it did in the performance by the Sextet, but this lack of effectiveness seems to us to be due to a somewhat too deliberate tempo. It is an idea of considerable originality which Hampton has here and the present recording is notable, aside from Hampton's own superior vibraphone work, for some really

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elegant alto sax business by Toots Mondello. *Shades of Jade*, an original by Mondello, is in a moderately undistinguished, quasi-Ellingtonian vein and doesn't quite register.

AAA—*Blue Lovebird*, and *The Nearness of You*. Kay Kyser and his Orchestra. Columbia 35488.

■ Two ultra-smoothies, the former the song-hit of the film *Lillian Russell* and the latter a new Hoagy Carmichael tune, done in Kyser's renowned ultra-smoothie manner. Just how Kyser manages to make palatable these recordings that drip with saccharinity I don't know, but there is no denying their effectiveness, in a treacly sort of a way. The really golden tone of his first trumpet is a potent factor in his recordings in this manner.

AAA—*Somebody Stole My Gal*, and *Let's Make Hay While the Sun Shines*. Count Basie and his Orchestra. Columbia 35500.

■ *Somebody Stole My Gal* is a characteristic Basie effort, with the usual staccato piano chords in high treble by Basie and some pretty powerful baritone and trumpet work. The mountainous Rushing sings with excellent rhythm but faulty intonation. The reverse is much less distinguished.

AAA—*You Think of Ev'rything*, and *Hong Kong Blues*. Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Victor 26636.

■ *You Think of Ev'rything* is the song hit of the current edition of the *Aquacade* at the N. Y. World's Fair, and comes from the fertile pen of Jimmy Van Heusen. It's a none too persuasive tune that bears few earmarks of Big Hit-dom, but Dorsey does what he can with it, which means that he gives it one full chorus of the fabulous Dorsey trombone tone, than which there continues to be no lovelier sound this side of heaven. But even this does not quite succeed in making a first-class record of it, while *Hong Kong Blues*, on the reverse, is a rather curious affair credited to Hoagy Carmichael, which, in the present recording, is about 90% vocal chorus, of a highly dubious variety, by Skeets Herfurt. It is all highly undiverting.

AAA—*My Fantasy*, and *Mr. Meadowlark*. Artie Shaw and his Orchestra. Victor 26614.

■ *My Fantasy* is one more in the by now well-established cycle of popular song adaptations of the classics. This time the Polovetzky Dances from *Prince Igor* have been raided to make a potential Hit leader. This one does not seem to have the direct appeal of the adaptations from Tschaikowsky, the greatest melodist of them all. But it does make a reasonably attractive dance number, if you can just

ignore the perfectly gosh-awful lyrics which we have come to accept as a necessary evil in songs of this type. Shaw's arrangements of this and the sprightly *Mr. Meadowlark* are somewhat less salon-ish than his previous efforts with his new band, and this is all to the good.

AA—*Sonata by L. Van Beethoven*, and *I Wanna Hear Seeing Songs*. Jimmy Lunceford and his Orchestra. Columbia 35453.

■ The former turns out to be an excruciatingly tasteless swinging of the opening pages of Beethoven's *Pathétique Sonata*. We profess to be fairly broadminded about this sort of thing in general, but the present example is just too awful for words. It is done with a considerable degree of virtuosity, true, but the mere idea of the thing is completely revolting and how it was ever passed by Columbia we can't imagine.

OTHER CURRENT POPULAR RECORDINGS OF MERIT

(The following are rated from quality of performance regardless of record quality.)

AAA—*Pennsylvania Six -Five Thousand*, and *Rug Cutter's Swing*. Glenn Miller and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10754.

AAA—*Get Your Boots Laced Papa*, Parts I and II. Woody Herman and his Orchestra. Decca 3187.

AAA—*The Blue Room*, and *Am I Blue?* Buster Bailey Sextet. Varsity 8333.

AAA—*No Name Jive*, Parts I and II. Charlie Barnet and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10737.

AAA—*Little Brown Jug*, and *Impromptu*. John Kirby and his Orchestra. Vocalion 5570.

AAA—*Slow Freight*, and *Bugle Call Rag*. Glenn Miller and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10740.

AAA—*It's the Last Time I'll Fall In Love*, and *Orchids for Remembrance*. Harry James and his Orchestra. Varsity 8349.

AAA—*Hard Times*, and *Who's Yehoodi?* Cab Calloway and his Orchestra. Vocalion 5566.

AAA—*Rock Island Flag Stop*, and *Under a Blanket of Blue*. Glen Gray and The Casa Loma Orchestra. Decca 3193.

AA—*Gullah Chant*, and *Noah*. Jimmie Livingston and his Orchestra. Varsity 8309.

AA—*Saboo*, and *You Bring Me Down*. Erskine Hawkins and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10756.

AA—*Forgive My Heart*, and *Love Is the Sweetest Thing*. Ziggy Elman and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10741.

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